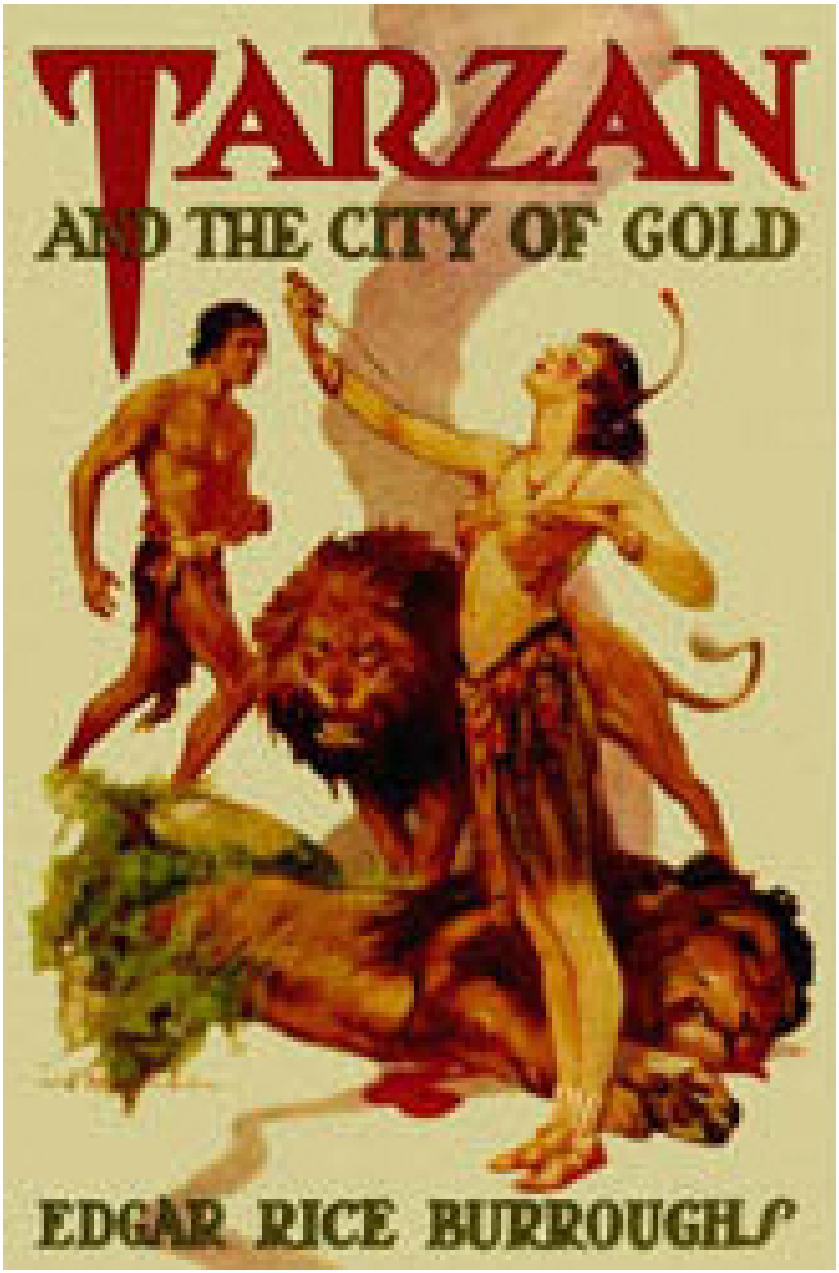
TARZAN

AND THE CITY OF GOLD



EDGAR RICE BURROUGHS

Tarzan and the City of Gold

Edgar Rice Burroughs

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About Burroughs:

Edgar Rice Burroughs (September 1, 1875 – March 19, 1950) was an American author, best known for his creation of the jungle hero Tarzan, although he also produced works in many genres. Source: Wikipedia

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Chapter 1

SAVAGE QUARRY

Down out of Tigre and Amhara upon Gojam and Shoa and Kaffa come the rains from June to September, carrying silt and prosperity from Abyssinia to the eastern Sudan and to Egypt, bringing muddy trails and swollen rivers and death and prosperity to Abyssinia.

Of these gifts of the rains, only the muddy trails and the swollen rivers and death interested a little band of Shiflas that held out in the remote fastnesses of the mountains of Kaffa. Hard men were these mounted bandits, cruel criminals without even a vestige of culture such as occasionally leavens the activities of rogues, lessening their ruthlessness. Kaficho and Galla they were, the off scourings of their tribes, outlaws, men with prices upon their heads.

It was not raining now, and the rainy season was drawing to a close, for it was the middle of September. But there was still much water in the rivers, and the ground was soft after a recent rain.

The Shijtas rode, seeking loot from wayfarer, caravan, or village; and as they rode, the unshod hoofs of their horses left a plain spoor that one might read upon the run.

A short distance ahead of them, in the direction toward which they were riding, a hunting beast stalked its prey. The wind was blowing from it toward the approaching horsemen, and for this reason their scent spoor was not borne to its sensitive nostrils, nor did the soft ground give forth any sound beneath the feet of their walking mounts.

Though the stalker did not resemble a beast of prey, such as the term connotes to the mind of man, he was one nevertheless, for in his natural haunts he filled his belly by the chase and by the chase alone. Neither did he resemble the mental picture that one might hold of a typical British lord, yet he was that, too-he was Tarzan of the Apes.

All beasts of prey find hunting poor during a rain, and Tarzan was no exception to the rule. It had rained for two days, and as a result Tarzan was hungry. A small buck was drinking in a stream fringed by bushes and tall reeds, and Tarzan was worming his way upon his belly through short grass to reach a position from which he might either charge or loose an arrow or cast a spear. He was not aware that a group of horsemen had reined in upon a gentle rise a short distance behind him where they sat in silence regarding him intently.

Usha the wind, who carries scent, also carries sound. Today, Usha carried both the scent and the sound of the Shiftas away from the keen nostrils and ears of the ape-man.

The circumstances that brought Tarzan northward into Kaffa are not a part of this story. Perhaps they were not urgent, for the Lord of the Jungle loves to roam remote fastnesses still unspoiled by the devastating hand of civilization, and needs but trifling incentive to do so.

At the moment, however, Tarzan's mind was not occupied by thoughts of adventure. He did not know that it loomed threateningly behind him. His concern and his interest were centred upon the buck which he intended should satisfy the craving of his ravenous hunger. He crept cautiously forward.

From behind, the white-robed Shiftas moved from the little rise where they had been watching him in silence, moved down toward him with spear and long-barrelled matchlock. They were puzzled. Never before had they seen a white man like this one, but if curiosity was in their minds, there was only murder in their hearts.

The buck raised his head occasionally to glance about him, wary, suspicious. When he did so, Tarzan froze into immobility. Suddenly the animal's gaze centred for an instant upon something in the direction of the ape-man; then it wheeled and bounded away. Instantly Tarzan glanced behind him, for he knew that it had not

been he who had frightened his quarry, but something beyond and behind him that the alert eyes of Wappi had discovered. That quick glance revealed a half-dozen horsemen moving slowly toward him, told him what they were, and explained their purpose. Knowing that they were Shiftas, he knew that they came only to rob and kill-knew that here were enemies more ruthless than Numa.

When they saw that he had discovered them, the horsemen broke into a gallop and bore down upon him, waving their weapons and shouting. They did not fire, evidently holding in contempt this primitively armed victim, but seemed to purpose riding him down and trampling him beneath the hoofs of their horses or impaling him upon their spears.

But Tarzan did not turn and run. He knew every possible avenue of escape within the radius of his vision for every danger that might reasonably be expected to confront him here, for it is the business of the creatures of the wild to know these things if they are to survive, and so he knew that there was no escape from mounted men by flight. But this knowledge threw him into no panic. Could the requirements of self-preservation have been best achieved by flight, he would have fled, but as they could not, he adopted the alternative quite as a matter of course-he stood to fight, ready to seize upon any fortuitous circumstance that might offer a chance to escape.

Tall, magnificently proportioned, muscled more like Apollo than like Hercules, garbed only in a lion skin, he presented a splendid figure of primitive manhood that suggested more, perhaps, the demigod of the forest than it did man. Across his back hung his quiver of arrows and a light, short spear; the loose coils of his grass rope lay across one bronzed shoulder. At his hip swung the hunting knife of his father, the knife that had given the boy-Tarzan the first suggestion of his coming supremacy over the other beasts of the jungle on that far-gone day when his youthful hand drove it into the heart of Bolgani the gorilla. In his left hand was his bow and between the fingers four extra arrows.

As Ara the lightning, so is Tarzan for swiftness. The instant that he had discovered and recognized the menace creeping upon him from behind and known that he had been seen by the horsemen, he had leaped to his feet, and in the same instant strung his bow. Now, perhaps even before the leading Shiftas realized the danger that

confronted them, the bow was bent, the shaft sped.

Short but powerful was the bow of the ape-man; short, that it might be easily carried through the forest and the jungle; powerful, that it might send its shafts through the toughest hide to a vital organ of its prey. Such a bow was this that no ordinary man might bend it.

Straight through the heart of the leading Shifta drove the first arrow, and as the fellow threw his arms above his head and lunged from his saddle four more arrows sped with lightning-like rapidity from the bow of the ape-man, and every arrow found a target. Another Shifta dropped to ride no more, and three were wounded.

Only seconds had elapsed since Tarzan had discovered his danger, and already the four remaining horsemen were upon him. The three who were wounded were more interested in the feathered shafts protruding from their bodies than in the quarry they had expected so easily to overcome, but the fourth was whole, and he thundered down upon the ape-man with his spear set for the great chest.

There could be no retreat for Tarzan; there could be no side-stepping to avoid the thrust, for a step to either side would have carried him in front of one of the other horsemen. He had but a single slender hope for survival, and that hope, forlorn though it appeared, he seized upon with the celerity, strength, and agility that make Tarzan Tarzan. Slipping his bowstring about his neck after his final shot, he struck up the point of the menacing weapon of his antagonist, and grasping the man's arm swung himself to the horse's back behind the rider.

As steel-thewed fingers closed upon the Shifta's throat he voiced a single piercing scream; then a knife drove home beneath his left shoulder blade, and Tarzan hurled the body from the saddle. The terrified horse, running free with flying reins, tore through the bushes and the reeds into the river, while the remaining shqtas, disabled by their wounds, were glad to abandon the chase upon the bank, though one of them, retaining more vitality than his companions, did raise his matchlock and send a parting shot after the escaping quarry.

The river was a narrow, sluggish stream but deep in the channel, and as the horse plunged into it, Tarzan saw a commotion in the

water a few yards downstream and then the outline of a long sinuous body moving swiftly toward them. It was Gimla the crocodile. The horse saw it too and, becoming frantic, turned upstream in an effort to escape. Tarzan climbed over the high cantle of the Abyssinian saddle and unslung his spear in the rather futile hope of holding the reptile at bay until his mount could reach the safety of the opposite bank toward which he was now attempting to guide him.

Gimla is as swift as he is voracious. He was already at the horse's rump, with opened jaws, when the Shifta at the river's edge fired wildly at the ape-man. It was well for Tarzan that the wounded man had fired hurriedly, for simultaneously with the report of the firearm, the crocodile dove, and the frenzied lashing of the water about him evidenced the fact that he had been mortally wounded.

A moment later the horse that Tarzan rode reached the opposite bank and clambered to the safety of dry land. Now he was under control again, and the ape-man wheeled him about and sent a parting arrow across the river toward the angry, cursing bandits upon the opposite side, an arrow that found its mark in the thigh of the already wounded man who had unwittingly rescued Tarzan from a serious situation with the shot that had been intended to kill him.

To the accompaniment of a few wild and scattered shots, Tarzan of the Apes galloped toward a nearby forest into which he disappeared from the sight of the angry Shiftas.

Chapter 2

THE WHITE PRISONER

Far to the south a lion rose from his kill and walked majestically to the edge of a nearby river. He cast not so much as a single glance at the circle of hyenas and jackals that had ringed him and his kill waiting for him to depart and which had broken and retreated as he rose. Nor, when the hyenas rushed in to tear at what he had left, did he appear even to see them.

There were the pride and bearing of royalty in the mien of this mighty beast, and to add to his impressiveness were his great size, his yellow, almost golden, coat, and his great black mane. When he had drunk his fill, he lifted his massive head and voiced a roar, as is the habit of lions when they have fed and drunk, and the earth shook to his thunderous voice, and a hush fell upon the jungle.

Now he should have sought his lair and slept, to go forth again at night and kill, but he did not do so. He did not do at all what might have been expected of a lion under similar circumstances. He raised his head and sniffed the air, and then he put his nose to the ground and moved to and fro like a hunting dog searching for a game scent. Finally he halted and voiced a low roar; then, with head raised, he moved off along a trail that led toward the north. The hvenas were glad to see him go; so were the jackals, who wished that the haenas would go also. Ska the vulture, circling above, wished that they would all leave.

At about the same time, many marches to the north, three angry, wounded Shiftas viewed their dead comrades and cursed the fate

that had led them upon the trail of the strange white giant. Then they stripped the clothing and weapons from their dead fellows and rode away, loudly vowing vengeance should they ever again come upon the author of their discomfiture and secretly hoping that they never would. They hoped that they were done with him, but they were not.

Shortly after he had entered the forest, Tarzan swung to an overhanging branch beneath which his mount was passing and let the animal go its way. The ape-man was angry; the Shiftas had frightened away his dinner. That they had sought to kill him annoyed him far less than the fact that they had spoiled his hunting. Now he must commence his search for meat all over again, but when he had filled his belly he would look into this matter of Shiftas. Of this he was certain.

Tarzan hunted again until he had found flesh, nor was it long before he had made his kill and eaten it.

Satisfied, he lay up for a while in the crotch of a tree, but not for long. His active mind was considering the matter of the Shiftas. Here was something that should be looked into. If the band were on the march, he need not concern himself about them, but if they were permanently located in this district, that was a different matter. Tarzan expected to be here for some time, and it was well to know the nature, the number, and the location of all enemies.

Returning to the dyer, Tarzan crossed it and took up the plain trail of the Shifias. It led him up and down across some low hills and then down into the narrow valley of the stream that he had crossed farther up. Here the floor of the valley was forested, the river winding through the wood. Into this wood the trail led.

It was almost dark now; the brief equatorial twilight was rapidly fading into night. The nocturnal life of the forest and the hills was awakening, and from down among the deepening shadows of the valley came the coughing grunts of a hunting lion. Tarzan sniffed the warm air rising from the valley toward the mountains; it carried with it the odours of a camp and the scent spoor of man. He raised his head, and from his deep chest rumbled a full-throated roar. Tarzan of the Apes was hunting, too.

In the gathering shadows he stood then, erect and silent, a lonely figure standing in solitary grandeur upon that desolate hillside.

Swiftly the silent night enveloped him; his figure merged with the darkness that made hill and valley, river and forest one. Not until then did Tarzan move; then he stepped down on silent feet toward the forest. Now was every sense alert, for now the great cats would be hunting. Often his sensitive nostrils quivered as they searched the air. No slightest sound escaped his keen ears.

As he advanced, the man scent became stronger, guiding his steps. Nearer and nearer sounded the deep cough of the lion, but of Numa Tarzan had little fear at present, knowing that the great cat, being upwind, could not be aware of his presence. Doubtless Numa had heard the ape-man's roar, but he could not know that its author was approaching him.

Tarzan had estimated the lion's distance down the valley and the distance that lay between himself and the forest, and had guessed that he would reach the trees before their paths crossed. He was not hunting for Numa the lion, and with the natural caution of the wild beast, he would avoid an encounter.

The mingled odours of a camp grew stronger in his nostrils, the scents of horses and men and food and smoke.

To you or to me, alone in a savage wilderness, engulfed in darkness, cognizant of the near approach of a hunting lion, these odours would have been most welcome. Tarzan's reaction to them was that of the wild beast that knows man only as an enemy-his muscles tensed as he smothered a low growl.

As he reached the edge of the forest, Numa was but a short distance to his right and approaching, so the ape-man took to the trees, through which he swung silently to the camp of the Shiftas.

Below him he saw a band of some twenty men with their horses and equipment. A rude boma of branches and brush had been erected about the camp site as a partial protection against wild beasts, but more dependence was evidently placed upon the fire which they kept burning in the centre of the camp.

In a single quick glance the ape-man took in the details of the scene below him, and then his eyes came to rest upon the only one that aroused either interest or curiosity, a white man who lay securely bound a short distance from the fire.

Ordinarily, Tarzan was no more concerned by the fate of a white man than by that of a black man or any other created thing to

which he was not bound by ties of friendship. But in this instance there were two factors that made the life of the captive a matter of interest to the Lord of the Jungle. First, and probably predominant, was his desire to be further avenged upon the Shiftas; the second was curiosity, for the white man that lay bound below him was different from any that he had seen before.

His only garment appeared to be a habergeon made up of ivory discs that partially overlay one another, unless certain ankle, wrist, neck, and head ornaments might have been considered to possess such utilitarian properties as to entitle them to a similar classification. Except for these, his arms and legs were naked. His head rested upon the ground with the face turned away from Tarzan so that the ape-man could not see his features but only that his hair was heavy and black.

As he watched the camp, seeking for some suggestion as to how he might most annoy or inconvenience the bandits, it occurred to Tarzan that a just reprisal would consist in taking from them something that they wanted, just as they had deprived him of the buck he had desired. Evidently they wished the prisoner very much or they would not have gone to the trouble of securing him so carefully, so this fact decided Tarzan to steal the white man from them.

To accomplish his design, he decided to wait until the camp slept, and settling himself comfortably in a crotch of the tree, he prepared to keep his vigil with the tireless patience of the hunting beast he was. As he watched, he saw several of the Shiftas attempt to communicate with their prisoner, but it was evident that neither understood the other.

Tarzan was familiar with the language spoken by the Kafichos and Gallos, and the questions that they put to their prisoner aroused his curiosity still further. There was one question that they asked him in many different ways, in several dialects, and in sign which the captive either did not understand or pretended not to. Tarzan was inclined to believe that the latter was true, for the sign language was such that it could scarcely be misunderstood. They were asking him the way to a place where there was much ivory and gold, but they got no information from him.

"The pig understands us well enough," growled one of the shtiftas; "he is just pretending that he does not."

"If he won't tell us, what is the use of carrying him around with us and feeding him?" demanded another. "We might as well kill him now."

"We will let him think it over tonight," replied one who was evidently the leader, "and if he still refuses to speak in the morning, we will kill him then."

This decision they attempted to transmit to the prisoner both by words and signs, and then they squatted about the fire and discussed the occurrences of the day and their plans for the future. The principal topic of their conversation was the strange white giant who had slain three of their number and had escaped upon one of their horses. After this had been debated thoroughly and in detail for some time, and the three survivors of the encounter had boasted severally of their deeds of valour, they withdrew to the rude shelters they had constructed and left the night to Tarzan, Numa, and a single sentry.

The silent watcher among the shadows of the tree waited on in patience until the camp should be sunk in deepest slumber and, waiting, planned the stroke that was to rob the Shiftas of their prey and satisfy his own desire for revenge.

At last the ape-man felt that the time had come when he might translate his plan into action; all but the sentry were wrapped in slumber, and even he was dozing beside the fire. As noiselessly as the shadow of a shadow, Tarzan descended from the tree, keeping well in the shadow cast by the fire.

For a moment he stood in silence, listening. He heard the breathing of Numa, in the darkness beyond the circle of firelight, and knew that the king of beasts was near and watching. Then he looked from behind the great bole of the tree and saw that the sentry's back was still turned toward him. Silently he moved into the open; stealthily, on soundless feet, he crept toward the unsuspecting bandit. He saw the matchlock across the fellow's knees: and for it he had respect, as have all jungle animals that have been hunted.

Closer and closer he came to his prey. At last he crouched directly behind him. There must be no noise, no outcry. Tarzan waited. Beyond the rim of fire waited Numa, expectant, for he saw that very gradually the flames were diminishing. A bronzed hand shot quickly

forward; fingers of steel gripped the brown throat of the sentry almost at the instant that a knife was driven from below his left shoulder blade into his heart. The sentry was dead without knowing that death threatened him.

Tarzan withdrew the knife from the limp body and wiped the blade upon the once white robe of his victim; then he moved softly toward the prisoner who was lying in the open. For him, they had not bothered to build a shelter. As he made his way toward the man, Tarzan passed close to two of the shelters in which lay members of the band, but he made no noise that might awaken them. When he approached the captive more closely, he saw in the diminishing light of the fire that the man's eyes were open and that he was regarding Tarzan with level, though questioning, gaze. The ape-man put a finger to his lips to enjoin silence, and then he came and knelt beside the man and cut the thongs that secured his wrists and ankles. He helped him to his feet, for the thongs had been drawn tightly, and his legs were numb.

For a moment he waited while the stranger tested his feet and moved them rapidly in an effort to restore circulation; then he beckoned him to follow, and all would have been well but for Numa the lion. At this moment, either to voice his anger against the flames or to terrify the horses into a stampede, he elected to voice a thunderous roar.

So close was the lion that the sudden shattering of the deep silence of the night startled every sleeper to wakefulness. A dozen men seized their matchlocks and leaped from their shelters. In the waning light of the fire they saw no lion, but they saw their liberated captive, and they saw Tarzan of the Apes standing beside him.

Among those who ran from the shelters was the least seriously wounded of Tarzan's victims of the afternoon. Imstantly recognizing the bronzed white giant, he shouted Iudlv to his companions, "It is he! It is the white demon who killed our friends."

"Kill him!" screamed another.

Completly surrounding the two white men, the Shiftas Advanced upon them, but they dared not fire because of The fear that they might wound one of their own comrades.

Tarzan could not loose an arrow or cast a spear, for he had ler all

his weapons except his rope and his knife hidden in the tree above the camp.

One of the bandits, more courageous, probably because less intelligent than his fellows, rushed to close quarters with musket clubbed. It was his undoing. The man-beast crouched, growling, and, as the other was almost upon him, charged. The musket butt, hurtling through the air to strike him down, he dodged, and then seized the weapon and wrenched it from the Shifta's grasp as though it had been a toy in a child's hands.

Tossing the matchlock at the feet of his companion, Tarzan laid hold upon the rash Galla, spun him around, and held him as a shield against the weapons of his fellows. But despite this reverse the other Shiftas gave no indication of giving up.

Two of them rushed in behind the ape-man, for it was he they feared the more; but they were to learn that their former prisoner might not be considered lightly. He had picked up a musket and, grasping it close to the muzzle, was using it as a club.

A quick backward glance assured Tarzan that his companion was proving himself a worthy ally, but it was evident that they could not hope to hold out long against the superior numbers pitted against them. Their only hope, he believed, lay in making a sudden, concerted rush through the thin line of foemen surrounding them, and he sought to convey his plan to the man standing back to back with him. But though he spoke to him in English and in several continental languages, the only reply he received was in a language that he himself had never before heard.

What was he to do? They must go together, and both must understand the purpose animating Tarzan. But how was that possible if they could not ccmmunicate with one another? Tarzan turned and touched the other lightly on the shoulder; then he jerked his thumb in the direction he intended going and beckoned with a nod of his head.

Instantly the man nodded his understanding and wheeled about as Tarzan started to charge. Using the man in his grasp as a flail, Tarzan sought to mow down those standing between him and liberty, but there were many of them, and presently they succeeded in dragging their comrade from the clutches of the ape-man. Now it seemed that the situation of the two whites was hopeless.

One fellow in particular was well-placed to fire without endangering any of his fellows, and raising his match-lock to his shoulder he took careful aim at Tarzan.

Chapter 3

CATS BY NIGHT

As the man raised his weapon to his shoulder to fire at Tarzan, a scream of warning burst from the lips of one of his comrades, to be drowned by the throaty roar of Numa the lion, as the swift rush of his charge carried him over the boma into the midst of the camp.

The man who would have killed Tarzan cast a quick backward glance as the warning cry apprised him of his danger. When he saw the lion, he cast away his rifle in his excitement and terror, his terrified scream mingled with the voice of Numa, and in his anxiety to escape the fangs of the man-eater he rushed into the arms of the ape-man.

The lion, momentarily confused by the firelight and the swift movement of the men, paused, crouching, as he looked to right and left. In that brief instant Tarzan seized the fleeing Shifta, and lifted him into the face of Numa; then he motioned to his companion to follow him, and, running directly past the lion, leaped the boma at the very point that Numa had leaped it. Close at his heels was the white captive of the Shiftas, and before the bandits had recovered from the first shock and surprise of the lion's unexpected charge, the two had disappeared in the shadows of the night.

Just outside the camp Tarzan left his companion for a moment while he swung into the tree where he had left his weapons and recovered them; then he led the way out of the valley up into the hills. At his elbow trotted the silent white man he had rescued from certain death at the hands of the Kaflcho and Galla bandits.

During the brief encounter in the camp, Tarzan had noted with admiration the strength, agility, and courage of the stranger who had aroused both his interest and his curiosity. Here, seemingly, was a man moulded to the dimensions of Tarzan's own standards, a quiet, resourceful, courageous fighting man. Radiating that intangible aura which we call personality, even in his silences he impressed the ape-man with a conviction that loyalty and dependability were innate characteristics of the man; so Tarzan, who ordinarily preferred to be alone, was not displeased to have the companionship of this stranger.

The moon, almost full, had risen above the black mountain mass to the east, shedding her soft light on hill and valley and forest, transforming the scene once more into that of a new world which was different from the world of daylight and from the world of moonless night, a world of strange greys and silvery greens.

Up toward a fringe of forest that clothed the upper slopes of the foothills and dipped down into canyon and ravine the two men moved as noiselessly as the passing shadow of a cloud; yet to one hidden in the dark recesses of the wood above, their approach was not unheralded, for on the breath of Usha the wind it was borne ahead of them to the cunning nostrils of the prince of hunters.

Sheeta the panther was hungry. For several days prey had been scarce and elusive. Now, in his nostrils, the scent of the man-things grew stronger as they drew nearer. Eagerly, Sheeta the panther awaited the coming of the men.

Within the forest, Tarzan sought a tree where they might lie up for the night. He found a branch that forked horizontally. With his hunting knife he cut other branches and laid them across the two arms of the Y thus formed. Over this rude platform he spread leaves, and then he lay down to sleep, while from an adjacent tree upwind Sheeta watched him. Sheeta also watched the other man-thing on the ground between the two trees. The great cat did not move; he seemed scarcely to breathe.

Even Tarzan was unaware of his presence, yet the ape-man was restless. He listened intently and sniffed the air, but detected nothing amiss. Below him, his companion was making his bed upon the ground in preference to risking the high-flung branches of the trees to which he was unaccustomed. It was the man upon the ground that Sheeta watched.

At last, his bed of leaves and grasses arranged to suit him, Tarzan's companion lay down. Sheeta waited. Gradually, almost imperceptibly, the sinuous muscles were drawing the hindquarters forward beneath the sleek body in preparation for the spring. Sheeta edged forward on the great limb upon which he crouched, but in doing so he caused the branch to move slightly and the leaves at its end to rustle a little.

Tarzan heard, and his eyes, turning quickly, sought and found the intruder. At the same instant Sheeta launched himself at the man lying on his rude pallet on the ground below, and as Sheeta sprang so did Tarzan.

Tarzan voiced a roar that was intended both to warn his companion and to distract the attention of Sheeta from his prey. The man upon the ground leaped quckly to one side, prompted more by an instinctive reacdon than by reason. The panther's body brushed him as it struck the ground, but the beast's thoughts were now upon the thing that had voiced that menacing roar rather than upon its intended prey.

Wheeling as he leaped aside, the man turned and saw the savage carnivore just as Tarzan landed full upon the beast's back. He heard the mingled growls of the two as they closed in battle, and his scalp stiffened as he realized that the sounds coining from the lips of his companion were quite as bestial as those issuing from the throat of the carnivore.

Tarzan sought a hold about the neck of the panther, while the great cat instantly attempted to roll over on its back that it might rip the body of its antagonist to shreds with the terrible talons that armed its hind feet. But this strategy the ape-man had anticipated, and rolling beneath Sheeta as Sheeta rolled, he locked his powerful legs beneath the belly of the panther. Then the great cat leaped to its feet again and sought to shake the man-thing from its back, and all the while a mighty arm was tightening about its neck, closing off its wind.

Tarzan had succeeded in drawing his knife. Momentarily the blade flashed before his eyes; then it was buried in the body of Sheeta. The cat, screaming from pain and rage, redoubled its efforts to dislodge the creature clinging to it in the embrace of death, but again the knife fell. Now Sheeta stood trembling upon uncertain feet as once again the knife was plunged deeply into his side; then,

his great voice forever stilled, he sank lifeless to the ground as the ape-man rolled from beneath him and sprang to his feet.

The man whose life Tarzan had saved came forward and laid a hand upon the shoulder of the ape-man, speaking a few words in a low voice but in the tongue that Tarzan did not understand, though he guessed that it expressed the gratitude that the manner of the man betokened.

Influenced by the attack of the panther and knowinz that Numa was abroad, Tarzan, by signs, persuaded the man to come up into the tree. Here the ape-man helped him construct a nest similar to his own. For the balance of the night they slept in peace, and the sun was an hour old before either stirred the following morning. Then the ape-man rose and stretched himself.

Nearby, the other man sat up and looked about him. His eyes met Tarzan's, and he smiled and nodded.

The wild beast in Tarzan looked into the brown eyes of the stranger and was satisfied that here was one who must be trusted; the man in him noted the headband that confined the black hair, saw the strangely wrought ivory ornament in the centre of the forehead, the habergeon that he was now donning, the ivory ornaments on wrists and ankles, and found his curiosity piqued.

The ivory ornament in the centre of the headband was shaped like a concave, curved trowel, the point of which projected above the top of the man's head and curved forward. His wristlets and anklets were of long flat strips of ivory laid close together and fastened around the limbs by leather thongs that were laced through holes piercing the strips near their tops and bottoms. His sandals were of heavy leather, apparently elephant hide, and were supported by leather thongs fastened to the bottoms of his anklets.

That all these trappings were solely for purposes of ornamentation Tarzan did not believe. He saw that almost without exception they would serve as a protection against a cutting weapon such as a sword or battle-axe.

But speculation concerning this matter was relegated to the background of his thoughts by hunger and recollection of the remains of yesterday's kill that he had hung high in a tree of the forest farther up the river. He dropped lightly to the ground, motioning the young warrior to follow him, and set off in the

direction of his cache, keeping his keen senses always on the alert for enemies.

Cleverly hidden by leafy branches, the meat was intact when Tarzan reached it. He cut several strips and tossed them down to the warrior waiting on the ground below; then he cut some for himself and crouching in a crotch proceeded to eat it raw. His companion watched him for a moment in surprise: then he made fire with a bit of steel and flint and cooked his own portion.

As he ate, Tarzan's active mind was considering plans for the future. He had come to Abyssinia for a specific purpose, thouzh the matter was not of such immediate importance that it demanded instant attention. In fact, in the philosophy that a lifetime of primitive environment had inspired, time was not an important consideration.

The phenomenon of this ivory-armoured warrior aroused questions that intrigued his interest to a far greater extent than did the problems that had brought him thus far from his own stamping grounds, and he decided that the latter should wait the solving of the riddle that his new-made acquaintance presented.

Having no other means of communication than signs rendered an exchange of ideas between the two difficult, but when they had finished their meal and Tarzan had descended to the ground, he succeeded in asking his companion in what direction he wished to go. The warrior pointed in a north-easterly direction toward the high mountains, and, as plainly as he could through the medium of signs, invited Tarzan to accompany him to his country. This invitation Tarzan accepted and motioned the other to lead the way.

For days that stretched to weeks the two men struck deeper and deeper into the heart of a stupendous mountain system. Always mentally alert and eager to learn, Tarzan took advantage of the opportunity to learn the language of his companion, and he proved such an apt pupil that they were soon able to make themselves understood by one another.

Among the first things that Tarzan learned was that his companion's name was Valthor, while Valthor took the earliest opportunity to evince an interest in the ape-man's weapons. As he was unarmed, Tarzan spent a day in making a spear and bow and arrows for him. Thereafter, as Valthor taught the Lord of the Jungle

to speak his language, Tarzan instructed the former in the use of the bow, the spear being already a familiar weapon to the young warrior.

Thus the days and the weeks passed and the two seemed no nearer the country of Valthor than when they had started from the vicinity of the camp of the Shiftas. Tarzan found game of certain varieties plentiful in the mountains. He hunted, and enjoyed the beauties of unspoiled nature, practically oblivious of the passage of time.

But Valthor was less patient, and at last, late one day when they found themselves at the head of a blind canyon where stupendous cliffs barred further progress, he admitted defeat. "I am lost," he said simply.

"That," remarked Tarzan, "I could have told you many days ago."

Valthor looked at him in surprise. "How could you know that," he demanded, "when you yourself do not know in what direction my country lies?"

"I know," replied the ape-man, "because during the past week you have led the way toward the four points of the compass, and today we are within five miles of where we were a week ago. Across this ridge at our right, not more than five miles away, is the little stream where I killed the ibex, and the gnarled old tree in which we slept that night just seven suns ago."

Valthor scratched his head in perplexity, and then he smiled. "I cannot dispute you," he admitted. "Perhaps you are right, but what are we going to do?"

"Do you know in what direction your country lies from the camp in which I found you?" asked Tarzan.

"The valley of Thenar is due east of that point," replied Valthor; "of that I am positive."

"Then we are directly southwest of it now, for we have travelled a considerable distance toward the south since we entered the higher mountains. If your country lies in these mountains, then it should not be difficult to find it if we can keep moving always in a northeasterly direction."

"This jumble of mountains with their twisting canyons and gorges confuses me," Valthor admitted. "You see, in all my life before, I

have never been farther from Ihenar than the valley of Onthar, and beth these valleys are urrounded by landmarks with which I am so familiar that I need no other guides. It has never been necessary for me to consult the positions of the sun, the moon, nor the stars before, and so they have been of no help to me since we set out in search of Thenar. Do you believe that you could hold a course toward the northeast in this maze of mountains? If you can, then you had better lead the way rather than I."

"I can go toward the northeast," Tarzan assured him "but I cannot find your country unless it lies in my path."

"If we reach a point within fifty or a hundred miles of it, from some high eminence we shall see Xarator," explained Valthor, "and then I shall know my way to Thenar, for Xarator is almost due west of Athne."

"What are Xarator and Athne?" demanded Tarzan.

"Xarator is a great peak, the centre of which is filled with fire and molten rock. It lies at the north end of the valley of Onthar and belongs to the men of Cathne, the city of gold. Athne, the city of ivory, is the city from which I come. The men of Cathne, in the valley of Onthar, are the enemies of my people."

"Tomorrow, then," said Tarzan, "we shall set out for the city of Athne in the valley of Thenar."

As Tarzan and Valthor ate meat that they had cut from yesterday's kill and carried with them, many weary miles to the south a black-maned lion lashed his tail angrily and voiced a savage growl as he stood over the body of a buffalo calf he had killed, and faced an angry bull pawing the earth and bellowing a few yards away.

Rare is the beast that will face Gorgo the buffalo, when rage inflames his red-rimmed eyes, but the great lion showed no intention of leaving its prey even in the face of the bull's threatened charge. He stood his ground. The roars of the lion and the bull mingled in a savage, thunderous dissonance that shook the ground, stilling the voices of the lesser people of the jungle.

Gorgo gored the earth, working himself into a frenzy of rage. Behind him, bellowing, stood the mother of the slain calf. Perhaps she was urging her lord and master to avenge the murder. The other members of the herd had bolted into the thickest of the jungle,

leaving these two to contest with Numa his right to his kill, leaving vengeance to those powerful horns backed by that massive neck.

With a celerity and agility that belied his great weight, the bull charged. That two such huge beasts could move so quickly and so lightly seemed incredible, as it seemed incredible that any creature could either withstand or avoid the menace of those mighty horns. But the lion was ready, and as the bull was almost upon him, he leaped to one side, reared upon his hind feet, and with one massive, taloned paw struck the bull a terrific blow on the side of its head that wheeled it half around and sent it stumbling to its knees, half-stunned and bleeding, its great jawbone crushed and splintered. And before Gorgo could regain his feet, Numa leaped full upon his back, buried his teeth in the bulging muscles of the great neck, and with one paw reached for the nose of the bellowing bull, jerking the head back with a mighty surge that snapped the vertebrae.

Instantly the lion was on his feet again, facing the cow, but she did not charge. Instead, bellowing, she crashed away into the jungle, leaving the king of beasts standing with his forefeet upon his latest kill.

That night Numa fed well, but when he had gorged himself he did not lie up as a lion should, but continued toward the north along the mysterious trail he had been following for many days.

Chapter 4

DOWN THE FLOOD

The new day dawned cloudy and threatening. The season of rains was over, but it appeared that a belated storm was gathering above the lofty peaks through which Tarzan and Valthor were searching for the elusive valley of Thenar.

All day they moved toward the northeast. Sometimes it rained a little, and always it threatened to rain more. A great storm seemed always to be gathering, yet it never broke during the long day. Tarzan made a kill before noon, and they ate, but immediately afterward they started on again.

It was late in the afternoon when they ascended out of a deep gorge and stood upon a lofty plateau. In the near foreground were no mountains, but at a distance lofty peaks were visible dimly through a light drizzle of rain.

Suddenly Valthor voiced an exclamation of elation. "We have found it!" he cried. "There is Xarator!"

Tarzan looked in the direction that the other pointed and saw a mighty, flat-topped peak in the distance, directly above which low clouds were reflecting a dull red light. "So that is Xarator!" he remarked. "And Thenar is directly east of it?"

"Yes," replied Valthor, "which means that Onthar must be just below the edge of this plateau, almost directly in front of us. Come!"

The two walked quickly over the level, grassy ground for a mile or two to come at length to the edge of the plateau beyond which,

and below them, stretched a wide valley.

"We are almost at the southern end of Onthar," said Valthor. "There is Cathne, the city of gold. It is a rich city, but its people are the enemies of my people."

Through the rain, Tarzan saw a walled city between a forest and a river. The houses were nearly all white, and there were many domes of dull yellow. The river, which ran between them and the city, was spanned by a bridge that was also a dull yellow colour in the twilight of the late afternoon storm. Tarzan saw that the river extended the full length of the valley, a distance of fourteen or fifteen miles, being fed by smaller streams coming down out of the mountains. Also extending the length of the valley was what appeared to be a well marked road.

Tarzan's eyes wandered back to the city of Cathne.

"Why do you call it the city of gold?" he asked.

"Do you not see the golden domes and the bridge of gold?" demanded Valthor.

"Are they covered with gold paint?" inquired Tarzan.

"They are covered with solid gold," replied Valthor.

"The gold on some of the domes is an inch thick, and the bridge is built of solid blocks of gold."

"Where do they find their gold?" Tarzan asked.

"Their mines lie in the hills directly south of the city," replied Valthor.

"And where is your country, Thenar?" asked the ape-man.

"Just beyond the hills east of Onthar. Do you see where the river and the road cut through the forest about five miles above the city? You can see them entering the hills just beyond the forest."

"Yes," replied Tarzan, "I see."

"The road and the river run through the Pass of the Warriors into the valley of Thenar: a little north-east of the centre of the valley lies Athne the city of ivory. There, beyond the pass, is my country.

"How far are we from Athne?' inquired Tarzan.

"About twenty-five miles, possibly a little less," replied Valthor.

"We might as well start now, then," suggested the ape-man, "for in this rain it will be more comfortable to be on the march than to lie

up until morning, and in your city we can find a dry place to sleep, I presume."

"Certainly," replied Valthor, "but it will not be safe to attempt to cross Onthar by daylight. We should certainly be seen by the sentries on the gates of Cathne, and, as these people are our enemies, the chances are that we should never cross the valley without being either killed or taken prisoners."

"Whatever you wish," agreed Tarzan with a shrug; "it is all the same to me if we start now or wait until dark."

"It is not very comfortable here," remarked the Athnean. "The rain is cold."

"I have been uncomfortable before," replied Tarzan; "rains do not last forever."

"If we were in Athne we should be very comfortable," sighed Valthor. "In my father's house there are fireplaces. Even now the flames are roaring about great logs, and all is warmth and comfort."

"Above the clouds the sun is shining," replied Tarzan, "but we are not above the clouds. We are here where the sun is not shining and there is no fire, and we are cold." A faint smile touched his lips. "It does not warm me to speak of fires or the sun."

"Nevertheless, I wish I were in Athne," insisted Valthor. "It is a splendid city, and Thenar is a lovely valley. In Thenar we raise goats and sheep and elephants. In Thenar there are no lions except those that stray in from Onthar; those we kill. Our farmers raise vegetables and fruits and hay; our artisans manufacture leather goods. They make cloth from the hair of goats and the wool of sheep. Our carvers work in ivory and wood.

"We trade a little with the outside world, paving for what we buy with ivory and gold. Were it not for the Cathneans we should lead a happy, peaceful life without a care.

"What do you buy from the outside world, and of whom do you buy it?" asked Tarzan.

"We buy salt, of which we have none of our own", explained Valthor. "We also buy steel for our weapons."

These things we buy from a band of Shiftas. With this same band we have traded since before the memory of man. Shifta chiefs and kings of Athne have come and gone, but our relations with this

band have never altered. I was searching for them when I became lost and was captured by another band."

"Do you never trade with the people of Cathne?" asked the ape-man.

"Once each year there is a week's truce during which we trade with them in peace. They give us gold and foodstuffs and hay in exchange for the salt and the steel we buy from the Shiftas, and the cloth, leather, and ivory that we produce.

"Besides mining gold, the Cathneans breed lions for war and sport, raise fruits, vegetables, cereals, and hay, and work in gold and, to a lesser extent, in ivory. Their gold and their hay are the products most valuable to us, and of these we value the hay more, for without it we should have to decrease our elephant herds."

"Why should two peoples so dependent upon one another fight?" asked Tarzan.

Yalthor shrugged. "I do not know; perhaps it is just a custom. Yet, though we talk much of wanting peace, we should miss the thrills and excitement that peace does not hold." His eyes brightened. "The raids:" he exclaimed. "There is a sport for men The Cathneans come with their lions to hunt our goats, our sheep, our elephants, and us. When we wish sport we go into Onthar after gold. No, I do not think that either we or Cathneans would care for peace."

For some time the two talked. Valthor told of his life in Athne. And as Valthor talked, the invisible sun sank ower into the west; heavy clouds, dark and ominous, hid the peaks to the north, settling low over the upper end of the valley. "I think we may start now," Valthor said.

"It will soon be dark."

Downward through a gully, the sides of which hid them from the city of Cathne, the two men made their way towards the floor of the valley. From the heavy storm clouds burst a flash of lightning followed by the roar of thunder; upon the upper end of the valley the storm god loosed his wrath; water fell in a deluge, wiping from their sight the hills beyond the storm.

By the time they reached level ground the storm was upon them and the gully they had descended a raging mountain torrent. The swift night had fallen; utter darkness surrounded them, darkness frequently broken by vivid flashes of lightning. The pealing of the

constant thunder was deafening. The rain engulfed them in solid sheets like the waves of the ocean. It was, perhaps, the most terrific storm that either of these men had ever seen.

They could not converse; only the lightning prevented their becoming separated, as it alone permitted Valthor to keep his course across the grassy floor of the valley in the direction of the city of gold, where they would find the road that led to the Pass of the Warriors and on into the valley of Thenar.

Presently they came within sight of the lights of the city, a few dim lights framed by the casements of windows, and a moment later they were on the road and were moving northward against the full fury of the storm.

For miles they pitted their muscles against the Herculean strength of the storm god. The rage of the storm god seemed to rise against them, knowing no bounds, as though he was furious that these two puny mortals should pit their strength against his. Suddenly, as though in a last titanic effort to overcome them, the lightning burst into a rrizh ty blaze that illuminated the entire valley for seconds, the thunder crashed as it had never crashed before, and a mass of water fell that crushed the two men to earth.

As they staggered to their feet again, foot-deep water swirled about their legs; they stood in a broad, racing torrent that rushed past them towards the river. But in that last effort the storm god had spent his force. The rain ceased; through a rift in the dark clouds the moon looked down, perhaps in wonder, upon a drowned world, and Valthor led the way again towards the Pass of the Warriors. The last of the rainy season was over.

It is seven miles from the bridge of gold, that is the gateway to the city of Cathne, to the ford where the road to Thenar crosses the river. It required three hours for Valthor and Tarzan to cover the distance, but at last they stood at the river's bank.

A boiling flood confronted them, tearing down a widened river towards the city of Cathne. Valthor hesitated. "Ordinarily," he said to Tarzan, "the water is little more than a foot deep. It must be three feet deep now.

"And it will soon be deeper," commented the ape-man.

"Only a small portion of the storm waters have had time to reach this point from the hills and the upper valley. If we are going to

cross tonight, we shall have to do it now.

"Very well," replied Valthor, "but follow me; I know the ford."

As the Athnean stepped into the water, the clouds closed again beneath the moon and plunged the world once more into darkness. As Tarzan followed he could scarcely see his guide ahead of him, and since Valthor knew the ford he moved more rapidly than the ape-man with the result that presently Tarzan could not see him at all, but he felt his way towards the opposite bank without thought of disaster.

The force of the stream was mighty, but mighty, too, are the thews of Tarzan of the Apes. The water, which Valthor had thought to be three feet in depth, was soon surging to the ape-man's waist, and then he missed the ford and stepped into a hole. Instantly the current seized him and swept him away; not even the giant muscles of Tarzan could cope with the might of the flood.

The Lord of the Jungle fought the swirling waters in an effort to reach the opposite shore, but in their embrace he was powerless.

Finding even his great strength powerless and weakening, Tarzan gave up the struggle to reach the opposite bank and devoted his efforts to keeping his nose above the surface of the angry flood. Even this was none too easy an accomplishment, as the rushing waters had a trick of twisting him about or turning him over. Often his head was submerged, and sometimes he floated feet first and sometimes head first, but he tried to rest his muscles as best he could against the time when some vagary of the torrent might carry him within reach of the bank upon one side or the other.

He knew that several miles below the city of Cathne the river entered a narrow gorge, for that he had seen from the edge of the plateau from which he had first viewed the valley of Onthar. Valthor had told him that beyond the gorge it tumbled in a mighty falls a hundred feet to the bottom of a rocky canyon. Should he not succeed in escaping the clutches of the torrent before it carried him into the gorge his doom was sealed, but Tarzan felt neither fear nor panic. His life had been in jeopardy often during his savage existence, yet he still lived.

He wondered what had become of Valthor. Perhaps he, too, was being hurtled along either above or helow him. But such was not the fact. Valthor had reached the opposite bank in safety and

waited there air Tarzan. When the ape-man did not appear within a reasonable Time, the Athnean shouted his name aloud, but though he received no answer he was still not sure that Tarzan was not upon the opposite side of the river, the loud roaring of which might have drowned the sound of the voice of either.

Then Valthor decided to wait until daylight, rather than abandon his friend in a country with which he was entirely unfamiliar.

Through the long night he waited and, with the coming of dawn, eagerly scanned the opposite bank of the river, his slender hope for the safety of his friend dying when daylight failed to reveal any sign of him. Then, at last, he was convinced that Tarzan had been swept away to his death by the raging flood, and, with a heavy heart, he turned away from the river and resumed his interrupted journey towards the Pass of the Warriors and the valley of Thenar.

Chapter 5

THE CITY OF GOLD

As Tarzan battled for his life in the swirling waters of the swollen river, he lost all sense of time; the seemingly interminable struggle against death might have been enduring without beginning, might endure without end, in so far as his numbed senses were concerned.

Turnings in the river cast him occasionally against one shore and then the other. Always, then, his hands reached up in an attempt to grasp something that might stay his mad rush towards the falls and death. At last success crowned his efforts-his fingers closed upon the stem of a heavy vine that trailed down the bank into the swirling waters, closed and held.

Hand over hand the man dragged himself out of the water and onto the bank, where he lay for several minutes; then he rose slowly to his feet, shook himself like some great lion, and looked about him in the darkness, trying to penetrate the impenetrable night. Faintly, as through shrubbery, he thought that he saw a light shining dimly in the distance. Where there was a light, there should be men. Tarzan moved cautiously toward it to investigate.

But a few steps from the river Tarzan encountered a wall, and when he was close to the wall he could no longer see the light. Reaching upward, he discovered that the top of the wail was still above the tips of his outstreched fingers—but walls which were made to keep one out also invited one to climb them.

Stepping back a few paces. Tarzan ran toward the wall and

sprang upward. His extended fingers gripped the tip of the wall and clung there. Slowly he drew himself up, threw a leg across the capstones, and looked to see what might be seen upon the opposite side of the wall.

He did not see much—a square of dim light forty or fifty feet away— that was all, and it did not satisfy his curiosity. Silently he lowered himself to the ground upon the same side as the light and moved cautiously forward. Beneath his bare feet he felt stone flagging, and guessed that he was in a paved courtyard.

He had crossed about half the distance to the light when the retreating storm flashed a farewell bolt from the distance. This distant lightning but barely sufficed to relieve momentarily the darkness surrounding the ape-man, revealing a low building, a lighted window, a deeply recessed doorway in the shelter of which stood a man. It also revealed Tarzan to the man in the doorway.

Instantly the silence was shattered by the brazen clatter of a gong. The door swung open, and men bearing torches rushed out. Tarzan, impelled by the natural caution of the beast, turned to run, but as he did so, he saw other open doors upon his flanks, and armed men with torches were rushing from these as well.

Realizing that flight was useless, Tarzan stood still with folded arms as the men converged upon him from three directions.

The torches carried by some of the men showed Tarzan that he was in a paved, quadrangular courtyard enclosed by buildings upon three sides and the wall he had scaled upon the fourth. Their light also revealed the fact that he was being surrounded by some fifty men armed with spears, the points of which were directed toward him in a menacing circle.

"Who are you?" demanded one of the men as the cordon drew tightly about him. The language in which the man spoke was the same as that which Tarzan had learned from Valthor, the common language of the enemy cities of Athne and Cathne.

"I am a stranger from a country far to the south," replied the ape-man.

"What are you doing inside the walls of the palace of Nemone?" The speaker's voice was threatening, his tone accusatory.

"I was crossing the river far above here when the flood caught me and swept me down; it was only by chance that I finally made a

landing here."

The man who had been questioning him shrugged. "Well", he admitted, "it is not for me to question you, anyway. Come! You will have a chance to tell your story to an officer, but he will not believe it either."

They conducted Tarzan into a large, low-ceilinged room which was furnished with rough benches and tables. Upon the walls hung weapons, spears and swords. There were shields of elephant hide studded with gold bosses. Upon the walls were mounted the heads of animals; there were the heads of sheep and goats and lions and elephants.

Two men guarded Tarzan in one corner of the room, while another was dispatched to notify a superior of the capture. The remainder loafed about the room, talking, playing games, cleaning their weapons. The prisoner took the opportunity to examine his captors.

They were well-set-up men, many of them not illfavoured, though for the most part of ignorant and brutal appearance. Their helmets, habergeons, wristlets, and anklets were of elephant hide heavily embossed with gold studs. Long hair from the manes of lions fringed the tops of their anklets and wristlets and was also used for ornamental purposes along the crests of their helmets and upon some cf their shields and weapons. The elephant hide that composed their habergeons was cut into discs, and the habergeon fabricated in a manner similar to that one of ivory which Valthor had worn. In the centre of each shield was a heavy brass of solid gold. Upon the harnesses and weapons of these common soldiers was a fortune in the precious metal.

While Tarzan, immobile, silent, surveyed the scene with eyes that seemed scarcely to move yet missed no detail, two warriors entered the room, and the instant that they crossed the threshold silence fell upon the men congregated in the chamber. Tarzan knew by that these were officers, though their trappings would have been sufficient evidence of their superior stations in life.

At a word of command from one of the two, the common warriors fell back, clearing one end of the room; then the two seated themselves at a table and ordered Tarzan's guards to bring him forward. As the Lord of the Jungle halted before them, both

men surveyed him critically.

"Why are you in Onthar?" demanded one who was evidently the superior, since he propounded all the questions during the interview.

Tarzan answered this and other questions as he had answered similar ones at the time of his capture, but he sensed from the attitudes of the two officers that neither was impressed with the truth of his statements. They seemed to have a preconceived conviction concerning him that nothing which he might say could alter.

"He does not look much like an Athnean," remarked the younger man.

"That proves nothing," snapped the other. "Naked men look like naked men. He might pass for your own cousin were he garbed as you are garbed."

"Perhaps you are right, but why is he here? A man does not come alone from Thenar to raid in Onthar. Unless—" he hesitated, "unless he was sent to assassinate the queen!"

"I had thought of that," said the older man. "Because of what happened to the last Athnean prisoners we took, the Athneans are very angry with the queen. Yes, they might easily attempt to assassinate her."

Tarzan was almost amused as he Contemplated the ease with which these two convinced themselves that what they wanted to believe true, was true. But he realized that this form of one-sided trial might prove disastrous to him if his fate were to be decided by such a tribunal, and so he was prompted to speak.

"I have never been in Athne," he said quietly. "I am from a country far to the south. An accident brought me here. I am not an enemy. I have not come to kill your queen or any other. Until today I did not know that your city existed." This was a long speech for Tarzan of the Apes. He was almost positive that it would not influence his captors, yet there was a chance that they might believe him.

Men are peculiar, and none knew this better than Tarzan, who, because he had seen rather less of men than of beasts, had been inclined to study those whom he had seen. Now he was studying the two men who were questioning him. The elder he judged to be

a man accustomed to the exercise of great power-cunning, ruthless, cruel. Tarzan did not like him. His was the instinctive appraisal of the wild beast.

The younger man was of an entirely different mould. He was intelligent rather than cunning; his countenance bespoke a frank and open nature. The ape-man judged that he was honest and courageous.

While he was certain that the younger man had little authority, compared with that exercised by his superior, vet Tarzan thought best to address him rather than the other. He thought that he might win an ally in the younger man ad was sure that he could never influence the elder, unless it was very much to the latter's interests to be influenced. And so, when he spoke again, he spoke to the younger of the two officers.

"Are these men of Athne like me?" he asked.

For an instant the officer hesitated: then he said, quite frankly, "No, they are not like you. You are unlike any man that I have seen".

"Are their weapons like my weapons?" continued the ape-man. "There are mine over in the corner of the room; your men took them away from me. Look at them."

Even the elder officer seemed interested. "Bring them here," he ordered one of the warriors.

The man brought them and laid them on the table before the two officers; the spear, the bow, the quiver of arrows, the grass rope, and the knife. The two men picked them up one by one and examined them carefully. Both seemed interested.

"Are they like the weapons of the Athneans?" demanded Tarzan.

"They are nothing like them," admitted the younger man. "What do you suppose this thing is for, Tomos?" he asked his companion as he examined Tarzan's bow.

"Let me take it," suggested Tarzan, "and I will show you how it is used."

The younger man handed the bow to the ape-man.

"Be careful, Gemnon," cautioned Tomos. "This may be a trick, a subterfuge by which he hopes to get possession of a weapon with which to kill us." "He cannot kill us with that thing," replied

Gemnon.

"Let's see how he uses it. Go ahead. Let's see, what did you say your name is?"

"Tarzan," replied the Lord of the Jungle, "Tarzan of the Apes."

"Well, go ahead, Tarzan, but see that you don't attempt to attack any of us."

Tarzan stepped to the table and took an arrow from his quiver; then he glanced about the room. On the wall at the far end a lion's head with open mouth hung near the ceiling. With what appeared but a single swift motion he fitted the arrow to the bow, drew the feathered shaft to his shoulder, and released it.

Every eye in the room had been upon him, for the common warriors had been interested spectators of what had been transpiring. Every eye saw the shaft quivering now where it protruded from the centre of the lion's mouth, and an involuntary exclamation broke from every throat, an exclamation in which were mingled surprise and applause.

"Take the thing away from him, Gemnon," snapped Tomos. "It is not a safe weapon in the hands of an enemy."

Tarzan tossed the bow to the table. "Do the Athneans use this weapon?" he asked.

Gemnon shook his head. "We know no men who use such a weapon," he replied.

"Then you must know that I am no Athnean," stated Tarzan, looking squarely at Tomos.

"It makes no difference where you are from," snapped Tomos; "you are an enemy".

The ape-man shrugged but remained silent. He had accomplished all that he had hoped for. He was sure that he had convinced them both that he was not an Athnean and had aroused the interest of the younger man.

Gemnon had leaned close to Tomos and was whispering in the latter's ear, evidently urging some action upon him. Tarzan could not hear what he was saying. The elder man listened impatiently; it was clear that he was not in accord with the suggestions of his junior.

"No," he said when the other had finished. "I will not permit

anything of the sort. The life of the queen is too sacred to risk by permitting this fellow any freedom. We shall lock him up for the night, and tomorrow decide what shall he done with him." He turned to a warrior who seemed to be an under-officer. "Take this fellow to the strong-house," he said "and see that he does not escape." Then he rose and strode from the room, followed by his younger companion.

When they had gone, the man in whose charge Tarzan had been left picked up the bow examined it. "What do you call this thing?" he demanded.

"A bow," replied the ape-man.

"And these?"

"Arrows."

'Will they kill a man?"

"With them I have killed men and lions and buffaloes and elephants," replied Tarzan. "Would you like to learn how to use them?" Perhaps, he thought, a little kindly feeling in the guardroom might be helpful to him later on. Just at present he was not thinking of escape; these people and the city of gold were far too interesting to leave until he had seen more of them.

The man fingering the bow hesitated. Tarzan guessed that he wished to try his hand with the weapon but feared to delay carrying out the order of his officer.

"It will take but a moment," suggested Tarzan. "See, let me show you."

Half-reluctantly the man handed him the bow and Tarzan selected another arrow.

"Hold them like this," he directed and placed the bow and arrow correctly in the other's hands. "Tell your men to stand aside; you may not shoot accurately at first. Aim at the lion's head, as I did. Now draw the bow-string back as far as you can."

The man, of stocky, powerful build, tugged at the bow-string, but the bow that Tarzan bent so easily he could scarcely bend at all. When he released the arrow it flew but a few feet and dropped to the floor. "What's wrong?" he demanded.

"It requires practice," the ape-man told him.

"There is a trick to it," insisted the under-officer. "Let me see you

do it again."

The other warriors, watching with manifest interest, whispered among themselves or commented openly.

"It takes a strong man to bend that stick," said one.

Althides, the under-officer, watched intently while Tarzan strung the bow again and bent it; he saw bow easily the stranger flexed the heavy wood, and he marvelled. The other men looked on in open admiration, and this time a shout of approval arose as Tarzan's second arrow crowded the first in the mouth of the lion.

Althides scratched his head. "I shall have to lock you up now," he said, "or old Tomos will have my head on the wall of his palace, but I shall practise with this weapon until I learn to use it. Are you sure that there is no trick in bending that thing you call a bow?"

"There is no trick to it," Tarzan assured him.

A guard accompanied Tarzan across the courtyard to another building where he was placed in a room which, in the light of the torches borne by his escort, he saw had another occupant. Then they left him, locking the heavy door behind them.

Chapter 6

THE MAN WHO STEPPED ON A GOD

Now that the torches were gone the room was very dark, but Tarzan lost no time in starting to investigate his prison. First he groped his way to the door, which he found to be constructed of solid planking with a small, square hole cut in it about the height of his eyes. There was no sign of lock or latch upon the inside and no way of ascertaining how it was secured from the outside.

Leaving the door, Tarzan moved slowly along the walls, feeling carefully over the stone surface. He knew that the other occupant of the cell was sitting on a bench in one corner at the far end. He could hear him breathing. As he examined the room Tarzan approached closer and closer to his fellow prisoner.

In the rear wall the ape-man discovered a window. It was small and high-set. The night was so dark that he could not tell whether it opened onto the outdoors or into another apartment of the building. As an avenue of escape the window appeared quite useless, as it was much too small to accommodate the body of a man.

As Tarzan was examining the window he was close to the corner where the other man sat, and now he heard a movement there. He also noticed that the fellow's breathing had increased in rapidity, as though he were nervous or excited. At last a voice sounded through the darkness.

"What are you doing?" it demanded.

"Examining the cell," replied Tarzan.

"It will do you no good, if you are looking for a way to escape," said the voice. "You won't get out of here until they take you out, no more than I shall."

Tarzan made no reply. There seemed nothing to say, and Tarzan seldom speaks, even when others might find much to say. He went on with his examination of the room. Passing the other occupant, he felt along the fourth and last wail, but his search revealed nothing to repay the effort. He was in a small, rectangular cell of stone that was furnished with a long bench at one end and had a door and a window letting into it.

Tarzan walked to the far end of the room and sat down upon the bench. He was cold, wet, and hungry, but he was unafraid. He was thinking of all that had transpired since night had fallen and left him to the mercy of the storm; he wondered what the morrow held for him.

Presently the man in the corner of the cell addressed him. "Who are you?" he asked. "When they brought you in I saw by the light of the torches that you are neither a Cathnean nor an Athnean." The man's voice was coarse, his tones gruff; he demanded rather than requested.

This did not please Tarzan, so he did not reply. "What's the matter?" growled his fellow prisoner. "Are you dumb?" His voice was raised angrily.

"Nor deaf," replied the ape-man. "You do not have to shout at me."

The other was silent for a short time; then he spoke in an altered tone. "We may be locked in this hole together for a long time," he said. "We might as well be friends."

"As you will," replied Tarzan, his involuntary shrug passing unoticed in the darkness of the cell.

My name is Phobez,' said the man; "what is yours?"

"Tarzan" replied the ape-man.

"Are you either cathnean or Athnean?"

"Neither: I am from a country far to the south."

"You would be better off had you stayed there," offered Phobeg. "How do you happen to be here in Cathne?"

"I was lost," explained the ape-man, who had no intention of

telling the entire truth and thus identifying himself as a friend of one of the Cathneans' enemies. "I was caught in the flood and carried down the river to your city. Here they captured me and accused me of coming to assassinate your queen.

"So they think you came to assassinate Nemone! Well, whether you did come for that purpose or not will make no difference."

"What do you mean?" demanded Tarzan.

"I mean that in any event you will be killed in one way or another," explained Phobeg, "whatever way will best amuse Nemone."

"Nemone is your queen?" inquired the ape-man indifferently.

"By the mane of Thoos, she is all that and more!" exclaimed Phobeg fervently. "Such a queen there never has been in Onthar or Thenar before nor ever will be again. By the teeth of the great one! She makes them all stand around, the priests, the captains, and the councillors."

"But why should she have me destroyed who am only a stranger that became lost?"

"We keep no white men prisoners, only blacks as slaves. Now, were you a woman you would not be killed, unless, of course, you were too good-looking."

"And what would happen to a too good-looking woman?" asked Tarzan.

"Enough, if Nemone saw her," replied Phobeg meaningly. "To be more beautiful than the queen is equivalent to high treason in the estimation of Nemone. Why, men hide their wives and daughters if they think that they are too beautiful."

"What did you do to get here?" inquired the ape-man.

"I accidentally stepped on our god's tail," replied Phobeg gloomily.

The man's strange oaths had not gone unnoticed by Tarzan and now this latest remarkable reference to diety astounded him. But contact with strange peoples had taught him to learn certain things concerning them by observation and experience rather than by direct questioning, matters of religion being chief among these. Now he only commented, "And therefore you are being punished."

"Not yet," replied Phobeg. "The form of my punishment has not

yet been decided. If Nemone has other amusements I may escape punishment, or I may come through my trial successfully and be freed, but the chances are all against me, for Nemone seldom has sufficient bloody amusement to sate her.

"Of course, if she leaves the decision of my guilt or innocence to the chances of an encounter with a single man, I shall doubtless be successful in proving the latter, for I am very strong and there is no better sword, or spear-man in Cathne. But I should have less chance against a lion, while, faced by the eternal fires of frowning Xarator, all men are guilty."

Although the man spoke the language Valthor had taught the ape-man and he understood the words, the meaning of what he said was as Greek to Tarzan. He could not quite grasp what the amusements of the queen had to do with the administration of justice, even though the inferences to be derived from Phobeg's remarks seemed apparent. The conclusion was too sinister to be entertained by the noble mind of the Lord of the Jungle.

He was still considering the subject and wondering about the eternal fires of frowning Xarator when sleep overcame his physical discomforts and merged his speculations with his dreams. To the south, another jungle beast crouched in the shelter of a rocky ledge while the storm that had betrayed Tarzan to new enemies wasted its waning wrath and passed on into the nothingness that is the sepulchre of storms. Then, as the new day dawned bright and clear, he arose and stepped out into the sunlight, the great lion that we have seen before, the great lion with the golden coat and the black mane.

He sniffed the morning air and stretched, yawning. His sinuous tail twitched nervously as he looked about over the vast domain that was his because he was there, as every wilderness is the domain of the king of beasts while his majesty is in residence.

From the slight elevation upon which he stood, his yellow-green eyes surveyed a broad plain, tree-dotted. There was game there in plenty— wildebeest, zebra, giraffe, koodoo, and hartebeest—and the king was hungry, for the rain had prevented his making a kill the previous night. He blinked his yellow-green eyes in the new sunlight and strode majestically down toward the plain and his breakfast, as, many miles to the north, a black slave accompanied by two warriors brought breakfast to another lord of the jungle in a

prison cell at Cathne.

At the sound of footsteps approaching his prison, Tarzan awoke and arose from the cold stone floor where he had been sleeping. Phobeg sat upon the edge of the wooden bench and watched the door.

"They bring us food or death," he said; "one never knows."

The ape-man made no reply. He stood there waiting until the door swung open and the slave entered with the food in a rough earthen bowl, and water in a glazed jug. He looked at the two warriors standing in the open doorway and at the sunlit courtyard beyond them. Curiosity kept him prisoner there quite as much as armed men or sturdy door, and now he only looked beyond the two warriors who were eyeing him intently. They had not been on duty the night before and had not seen him, but they had heard of him. His feat with his strange weapon had been told them by their fellows.

"So this is the wild man!" exclaimed one.

"You had better be careful, Phobeg," said the other. "I should hate to be locked up in a cell with a wild man." Then, laughing at his joke, he slammed the door after the slave had come out, and the three went away.

Phobeg was appraising Tarzan with a new eye; his nakedness took on a new meaning in the light of that descriptive term, wild man. Phobeg noted the great height of his cellmate, the expanse of his chest, and his narrow hips, but he greatly under-estimated the strength of the symmetrical muscles that flowed so smoothly beneath the bronzed hide. Then he glanced at his own gnarled and knotted muscles and was satisfied.

"So you are a wild man!" he demanded. "How wild are you?"

Tarzan turned slowly toward the speaker. He thought that he recognized thinly veiled sarcasm in the tone of Phobeg's voice. For the first time he saw his companion in the light of day. He saw a man a few inches shorter than himself but of mighty build, a man of great girth and bulging muscles, a man who might outweigh the Lord of the Jungle by fifty pounds. He noted his prominent jaw, his receding forehead, and his small eyes. In silence Tarzan regarded Phobeg.

"Why don't you answer me?" angrily demanded the Cathnean.

"Do not be a fool," admonished Tarzan. "I recall that last night you said that as we might be confined here for a long time we might as well be friends. We cannot be friends by insulting one another. Food is here. Let us eat."

Phobeg grunted and inserted one of his big paws into the pot the slave had brought. As there was no knife or fork or spoon Tarzan, had no alternative but to do likewise if he wished to eat; and so he, too, took food from the pot with his fingers. The food was meat; it was tough and stringy and under-cooked. Had it been raw, Tarzan had been better suited.

Phobeg chewed assiduously upon a mouthful of the meat until he had reduced the fibres to a pulp that would pass down his throat. "An old lion must have died yesterday." he remarked, "a very old lion."

"If we acquire the characteristics of the creatures we eat, as many men believe," Tarzan replied, "we should soon die of old age on this diet."

"Yesterday I had a piece of goat's meat from Thenar," said Phobeg. "It was strong and none too tender, but it was better than this. I am accustomed to good food. In the temple the priests live as well as the nobles do in the palace, and so the temple guard lives well on the leavings of the priests. I was a member of the temple guard. I was the strongest man on the guard. I am the strongest man in Cathne. When raiders come from Thenar, or when I am taken there on raids, the nobles marvel at my strength and bravery. I am afraid of nothing. With my bare hands I have killed men. Did you ever see a man like me?"

"No," admitted the ape-man.

"Yes, it is well that we should be friends," continued Phobeg, "well for you. Everyone wants to be friends with me, for they have learned that my enemies get their necks twisted. I take them like this, by the head and the neck," and with his great paws he went through a pantomime of seizing and twisting. "Then, crack! their spines break. What do you think of that?"

"I should think that your enemies would find that very uncomfortable," replied Tarzan.

"Uncomfortable!" ejaculated Phobeg. "Why, man, it kills them!"

"At least they can no longer hear," commented the Lord of the

Jungle dryly.

"Of course they cannot hear; they are dead. I do not see what that has to do with it."

"That does not surprise me," Tarzan assured him.

"What does not surprise you?" demanded Phobeg.

"That they are dead, or that they cannot hear?"

"I am not easily surprised by anything" explained the ape-man.

Beneath his low forehead Pbobegs brows were knitted in thought. He scratched his head. "What were we talking about?" he demanded.

"We were trying to decide which would be more terrible," explained Tarzan patiently, "to have you for a friend or an enemy."

Phobeg looked at his companion for a long time. One could almost see the laborious effort of thinking going on inside that thick skull. Then he shook his head. "That is not what we were talking about at all," he grumbled.

"Now I have forgotten. I never saw anyone as stupid as you. When they called you a wild man they must have meant a crazy man. And I have got to remain locked in here with you for no one knows how long".

"You can always get rid of me," said Tarzan quite seriously.

"How can I get rid of you?" demanded the Cathnean.

"You can twist my neck, like this." Tarzan mimicked the pantomime in which Phobeg had explained how he rid himself of his enemies.

"I could do it," boasted Phobeg, "but then they would kill me. No, I shall let you live."

"Thanks," said Tarzan.

"Or at least while we are locked up here together," added Phobeg.

Loss of liberty represented for Tarzan, as it does for all creatures endowed with brains, the acme of misery, more to be avoided than physical pain; yet, with stoic fortitude he accepted his fate without a murmur of protest, and while his body was confined in four walls of stone, his memories roved the jungle and the veldt and lived again the freedom and the experience of the past.

He recalled the days of his childhood when fierce Kala, the she-

ape that had suckled him at her hairy breast in his infancy, had protected him from the dangers of their savage life. He recalled her gentleness and her patience with this backward child who must still be carried in her arms long after the balus of her companion shes were able to scurry through the trees seeking their own food and even able to protect themselves against their enemies by flight if nothing more.

These were his first impressions of life, dating back perhaps to his second year while he was still unable to swing through the trees or even make much progress upon the ground. After that he had developed rapidly, far more rapidly than a pampered child of civilization, for upon the quick development of his cunning and his strength depended his life.

With a faint smile he recalled the rage of old Tublat, his foster father, when Tarzan had deliberately undertaken to annoy him. Old "Broken-nose" had always hated Tarzan because the helplessness of his long-drawn infancy had prevented Kala from bearing other apes. Tublat had argued in the meagre language of the apes that Tarzan was a weakling that would never become strong enough or clever enough to be of value to the tribe. He wanted Tarzan killed, and he tried to get old Kerchak, the king, to decree his death; so when Tarzan grew old enough to understand, he hated Tublat and sought to annoy him in every way that he could.

His memories of those days brought only smiles now, save only the great tragedy of his life, the death of Kala. But that had occurred later, when he was almost a grown man. She had been saved to him while he needed her most and not taken away until after he was amply able to fend for himself and meet the other denizens of the jungle upon an equal footing. But it was not the protection of those creat arms and mighty fangs that he had missed, that he still missed even today: he had missed the maternal live of that savage heart, the only mother-love that he had ever known.

And now his thoughts turned naturally to other friends of the jungle of whom Kala had been first and greatest. There were his many friends among the great apes; there was Tantor the elephant; there was Jad-bai-ja the Golden Lion; there was little Nkima. Poor little Nkima! Much to his disgust and amid loud howls, Nkima had been left behind this time when Tarzan set out upon his journey into the north country. The little monkey had contracted a cold and

the ape-man did not wish to expose him to the closing rains of the rainy season.

Tarzan regretted a little that he had not brought Jad-bal-ja with him, for though he could do very well for considerable periods without the companionship of man, he often missed that of the wild beasts that were his friends. Of course the Golden Lion was sometimes an embarrassing companion when one was in contact with human beings, but he was a loyal friend and good company, for only occasionally did he break the silence.

Tarzan recalled the day that he had captured the tiny cub. What a cub he had been! All lion from the very first. Tarzan sighed as he thought of the days that he and the Golden Lion had hunted and fought together.

Chapter 7

NEMONE

Tarzan had thought, when he went without objection into the prison cell at Cathne, that the next morning he would be questioned and released, or at least be taken from the cell. Once out of the cell again, Tarzan had no intention of returning to it, the Lord of the Jungle being very certain of his prowess.

But they had not let him out the next morning nor the next nor the next. Perhaps he might have made a break for liberty when food was brought, but each time he thought that the next day would bring his release, and waited.

Phobeg had been imprisoned longer than had Tarzan, and the confinement was making him moody. Sometimes he sat for hours staring at the floor; at other times he would mumble to himself, carrying on long conversations which were always bitter and that usually resulted in working him up into a rage. Then he might seek to vent his spleen upon Tarzan. The fact that Tarzan remained silent under such provocation increased Phobeg's ire, but it also prevented an actual break between them, for it is still a fact, however trite the saying, that it takes two to make a qarrel. Tarzan would not quarrel; at least, not yet.

"Nemone won't get much entertainment out of you," growled Phobeg this morning after one of his tirades had elicited no response from the ape-man.

"Well, even so," replied Tarzan, "you should more than make up

to her any amusement value that I may lack."

"That I will!" exclaimed Phobeg. "If it is fighting she wants, she shall see such fighting as she has never seen before when she matches Phobeg with either man or beast. But you! Bah! She will have to pit you against some half-grown child if she wishes to see any fight at all. You have no courage; your veins are filled with water. If she is wise she will dump you into Xarator. By Thoos's tail! I should like to see you there. I'll bet my best habergeon they could hear you scream in Athne."

The ape-man was standing gazing at the little rectangle of sky that he could see through the small barred opening in the door. He remained silent after Phobeg had ceased speaking, totally ignoring him as though he did not exist. Phobeg became furious. He rose from the bench upon which he had been sitting.

"Coward!" he cried. "Why don't you answer me? By the yellow fangs of Thoos! I've a mind to beat some manners into you, so that you will know enough to answer when your betters speak." He took a step in the direction of the ape-man.

Slowly Tarzan turned toward the angry man, his level gaze fixed upon the other's eyes, and waited. He said nothing, but his attitude was an open book that even the stupid Phobeg could read. And Phobeg hesitated.

Just what might have happened no man may know, for at that instant four warriors came and swung the door of the cell open. "Come with us," said one of them, "both of you."

Phobeg sullenly, Tarzan with the savage dignity of Numa, accompanied the four warriors across the open courtyard and through a doorway that led into a long corridor, at the end of which they were ushered into a large room. Here, behind a table, sat seven warriors trapped in ivory and gold. Among them Tarzan recognised the two who had questioned him the night of his capture, old Tomos and the younger Gemnon.

"These are nobles," whispered Phobeg to Tarzan.

"That one at the centre of the table is old Tomos, the queen's councillor. He would like to marry the queen, but I guess he is too old to suit her. The one on his right is Erot. He used to be a common warrior like me, but Nemone took a fancy to him, and now he is the queen's favourite. She won't marry him though, for he is

not of noble blood. The young fellow on Tomos's left is Gemnon. He is from an old and noble family. Warriors who have served him say he is a very decent sort."

As Phobeg gossiped, the two prisoners and their guard had been standing just inside the doorway waiting to be summoned to advance, and Tarzan had had an opportunity to note the architecture and furnishings of the room. The ceiling was low and was supported by a series of engaged columns at regular intervals about the four walls. Between the columns, along one side of the room behind the table at which the nobles were seated, were unglazed windows, and there were three doorways: that through which Tarzan and Phobeg had been brought, which was directly opposite the windows, and one at either side of the room.

The floor was of stone, composed of many pieces of different shapes and sizes, but all so nicely fitted that joints were barely discernible. On the floor were a few rugs either of the skins of lions or of a stiff and heavy wool weave.

But now Tarzan's examination of the room was interrupted by the voice of Tomos. "Bring the prisoners forward," he directed the under-officer who was one of the four warriors escorting them.

When the two men had been halted upon the opposite side of the table from the nobles, Tomos pointed at Tarzan's companion.

"Which is this one?" he demanded.

"He is called Phobeg" replied the under-officer.

"What is the charge against him".

"He profaned Thorns."

"Who brought the charge?"

"The high priest."

"It was an accident," Phobeg hastened to explain. "I meant no disrespect."

"Silence!" snapped Tomos. Then he pointed at Tarzan.

"And this one?" he demanded. "Who is he?"

"This is the one who calls himself Tarzan," explained Gemnon. "You will recall that you and I examined him the night he was captured."

"Yes, yes," said Tomos. "I recall. He carried some sort of strange

weapon."

"Is he the man of whom you told me," asked Erot, "the one who came from Athne to assassinate the queen?" "This is the one," replied Tomos.

"He does not greatly resemble an Athneen," commented Erot.

"I am not," said Tarzan.

"Silence!" commanded Tomos.

"Why should I be silent?" demanded Tarzan. "There is none other to speak for me than niyself; therefore I shall speak for myself. I am no enemy of your people, nor are my people at war with yours. I demand my liberty!"

"He demands his liberty," mimicked Erot and laughed aloud as though it was a good joke. "The slave demands his liberty!"

Tomos half rose from his seat, his face purple with rage. He banged the table with his fist. He pointed a finger at Tarzan. "Speak when you are spoken to, slave, and not otherwise."

"It is evident that he is a man from a far country," interjected Gemnon. "It is not strange that he neither understands our customs nor recognizes the great among us. Perhaps we should listen to him. If he is not an Athnean and no enemy, why should we imprison him or punish him?"

"He came over the palace walls at night," retorted Tomos. "He could have come for but one purpose, to kill our queen; therefore, he must die."

"He told us that the river washed him down to Cathne," persisted Gemnon. "It was a very dark night and he did not know where he was when he finally succeeded in crawling ashore; it was only chance that brought him to the palace."

"A pretty story but not plausible," countered Erot.

"Why not plausible?" demanded Gemnon. "I think it quite plausible. We know that no man could have swum the river in the flood that was raging that night, and that this man could not have reached the spot at which he climbed the wall except by swimming the river or crossing the bridge of gold. We know that he did not cross the bridge, because the bridge was well-guarded and no one crossed that night. Knowing therefore that he did not cross the bridge and could not have swum the river, we know that the only

way he could have reached that particular spot upon the river's bank was by being swept downstream from above. I believe his story, and I believe that we should treat him as an honourable warrior from some distant kingdom until we have better reasons than we now have for believing otherwise."

"I should not care to be the one to defend a man who came here to kill the queen," sneered Erot meaningly.

"Enough of this!" said Tomos curtly. "The man shall be judged fairly and destroyed as Nemone thinks best."

As he ceased speaking, a door at one end of the room opened and a noble resplendent in ivory and gold stepped into the chamber. Halting just within the threshold, he faced the nobles at the table.

"The queen" he announced in a loud voice and then stepped aside.

All eves turned in the direction of the doorway and at the same time the nobies rose to their feet and then knelt upon the floor, facing the doorway through which the queen would enter. The warriors on zuail. irruding those with Tarzan and Phobeg, did likewise. Phobeg following their example. Everyone in the room knelt except the noble who had announced the queen, or rather every Cathnean. Tarzan of the Apes did not kneel.

"Down, jackal!" growled one of the guards in a whisper, and then amidst deathly silence a woman stepped into view and paused, framed in the carved casing of the doorway. Regal, she stood there glancing indolently about the apartment; then her eyes met those of the ape-man and, for a moment, held there on his. A slight frown of puzzlement contracted her straight brows as she continued on into the room, approaching the table and the kneeling men.

Behind her followed a half-dozen richly arrayed nobles, resplendent in burnished gold and gleaming ivory, but as they crossed the chamber Tarzan saw only the gorgeous figure of the queen. She was clothed more simply than her escort, but she was far more beautiful than the crude Phobeg had ever painted her.

A narrow diadem set with red stones encircled her brow, confining her glossy black hair. Upon either side of her head, covering her ears, a large golden disc depended from the diadem, while from its rear rose a slender filament of gold that curved forward, supporting a large red stone above the centre of her head.

About her throat was a simple golden band that held a brooch and pendant of ivory in the soft hollow of her neck. Upon her upper arms were similar golden bands supporting triangular, curved ornaments of ivory.

That she was marvelously beautiful by the standards of any land or any time grew more apparent to the Lord of the Jungle as she came nearer to him; yet her presence exhaled a subtle essence that left him wondering if her beauty were the reflection of a nature all good or all evil, for her mien and bearing suggested that there could be no compromise—Nemone, the queen, was all one or all the other.

She kept her eyes upon him as she crossed the room slowly, and Tarzan did not drop his own from hers.

The quizzical frown still furrowed Nemone's smooth brow as she reached the end of the table where the nobles knelt. It was not an angry frown, and there might have been in it much of interest and something of amusement, for unusual things interested and amused Nemone, so rare were they in the monotony of her life. It was certainly unusual to see one who did not accord her the homage due a queen.

As she halted she turned her eyes upon the kneeling nobles. "Arise!" she commanded, and in that single word the vibrant qualities of her rich, deep voice sent a strange thrill through the ape-man. "Who is this that does not kneel to Nemone?" she demanded.

As Tarzan had been standing behind the nobles as they had turned to face Nemone when they knelt, only two of his guards had been aware of his dereliction. Now as they arose and faced about, their countenances were filled with horror and rage when they discovered that the strange captive had so affronted their queen.

Tomos went purple again. He spluttered with rage. "He is an ignorant and impudent savage, my queen," he said, "but as he is about to die, his actions are of no consequence."

"Why is he about to die," demanded Nemone, "and how is he to die?"

"He is to die because he came here in the dead of night to assassinate your majesty," explained Tomos; "the manner of his death rests, of course, in the hands of our gracious queen."

Nernznes dark eves, veiled behind long lashes, appraised the ape-man. lingering upon his bronzed skin and the rolling contours of his muscles, then rising to the handsome race Ufltil her eves met his. "Why did you not kneel?" she asked.

"Why should I kneel to you who they have said will have me killed?" demanded Tarzan. "Why should I kneel to you who are not my queen? Why should I, Tarzan of the Apes, who kneels to no one, kneel to you?"

"Silence!" cried Tomos. "Your impertinence knows no bounds. Do you not realize, ignorant slave, low savage, that you are addressing Nemone, the queen!"

Tarzan made no reply; he did not even look at Tomos; his eyes were fixed upon Nemone. She fascinated him, but whether as a thing of beauty or a thing of evil, he did not know.

Tomos turned to the under-officer in command of the escort that was guarding Tarzan and Phobeg. "Take them away!" he snapped. "Take them back to their cell until we are ready to destroy them."

"Wait," said Nemone. "I would know more of this man," and then she turned to Tarzan. "So you came to kill me!" Her voice was smooth, almost caressing. At the moment the woman reminded Tarzan of a cat that is playing with its victim. "Perhaps they chose a good man for the purpose; you look as though you might be equal to any feat of arms."

"Killing a woman is no feat of arms," replied Tarzan. "I do not kill women. I did not come here to kill you." "Then why did you come to Onthar?" inquired the queen in her silky voice.

"That I have already explained twice to that old man with the red face," replied Tarzan, nodding in the general direction of Tomos. "Ask him; I am tired of explaining to people who have already decided to kill me."

Tomos trembled with rage and half drew his slender, dagger-like sword.

Nemone had flushed angrily at Tarzan's words, but she did not lose control of herself. "Sheath your sword, Tomos," she commanded icily. "Nemone is competent to decide when she is affronted and what steps to take. The fellow is indeed impertinent, but it seems to me that if he affronted anyone, it was Tomos he affronted and not Nemone. However, his temerity shall not go

unpunished. Who is this other?"

"He is a temple guard named Phobeg," explained Erot. "He profaned Thoos."

"It would amuse us," said Nemone, "to see these two men fight upon the Field of the Lions. Let them fight without other weapons than those which Thoos has given them. To the victor, freedom," she hesitated momentarily, "freedom within limits. Take them away!"

Chapter 8

UPON THE FIELD OF THE LIONS

Tarzan and Phobeg were back in their little stone cell; the ape-man had not escaped. He had had no opportunity to escape on the way back to his prison, for the warriors who guarded him had redoubled their vigilance.

Phobeg was moody and thoughtful. The attitude of his fellow prisoner during their examination by the nobles, his seeming indifference to the majesty and power of Nemone, had tended to alter Phobeg's former estimate of the ape-man's courage. He realized now that the fellow was either a very brave man or a very great fool, and he hoped that he was the latter.

Phobeg was stupid, but past experience had taught him something of the psychology of mortal combat. He knew that when a man went into battle fearing his antagonist, he was already handicapped and partly defeated. Now Phobeg did not fear Tarzan; he was too stupid and too ignorant to anticipate fear.

Tarzan, on the other hand, was of an entirely different temperament, and though he never knew fear it was for a very different reason. Being intelligent and imaginative, he could visualize all the possibilities of an impending encounter, but he could never know fear, because death held no terrors for him. He had learned to suffer physical pain without the usually attendant horrors of mental anguish.

"It will doubtless be tomorrow," said Phobeg grimly.

"What will be tomorrow?" inquired the ape-man.

"The combat in which I shall kill you," explained the cheerrful Phobeg.

"Oh, so you are going to kill me! Phobeg, I am surprised. I thought that you were my friend." Tarzan's tone was serious, though a brighter man than Phobeg might have discovered in it a note of banter. But Phobeg was not bright at all, and he thought that Tarzan was already commencing to throw himself upon his mercy.

"It will soon be over," Phobeg assured him. "I promise that I shall not let you suffer long."

"I suppose that you will twist my neck like this," said Tarzan, pretending to twist something with his two hands.

"M-m-m, perhaps," admitted Phobeg, "but I shall have to throw you about a bit first. We must amuse Nemone, you know."

"Surely, by all means!" assented Tarzan. "But suppose you should not be able to throw me about? Suppose that I should throw you about? Would that amuse Nemone? Or perhaps it would amuse you!"

Phobeg laughed. "It amuses me very much just to think about it," he said, "and I hope that it amuses you to think about it, for that is as near as you will ever come to throwing Phobeg about. Have I not told you that I am the strongest man in Cathne?"

"Oh, of course," admitted Tarzan. "I had forgotten that for the moment."

"You would do well to try to remember it," advised Phobeg, "or otherwise our combat will not be interesting at all."

"And Nemone would not be amused! That would be sad. We should make it as interesting and exciting as possible, and you must not conclude it too soon."

"You are right about that," agreed Phobe. "The better it is the more generous will Nemone feel toward me when it is over. She may even give me a donation in addition to my liberty if we amuse her well".

"By the belly of Thoos!" he exclaimed, slapping his thigh. "We must make a good fight of it and a long one. Now listen! How would this be At first we shall pretend that you are defeating me; I shall let you throw me about a bit. You see? Then I shall get the

better of it for a while, and then you. We shall take turns up to a certain point, and then, when I give you the cue, you must pretend to be frightened, and run away from me. I shall then chase you all over the arena, and that will give them a good laugh. When I catch you at last (and you must let me catch you right in front of Nemone), I shall then twist your neck and kill you, but I will do it as painlessly as possible."

"You are very kind," said Tarzan grimly.

"Do you like the plan?" demanded Phobeg.

"It will certainly amuse them," agreed Tarzan, "if it works."

"If it works! Why should it not work? It will, if you do your part."

"But suppose I kill you?" inquired the Lord of the Jungle.

"There you go again!" exclaimed Phobeg. "I must say that you are a good fellow after all, for you will have your little joke. And I can tell you that there is no one who enjoys a little joke more than Phobeg."

"I hope that you are in the same mood tomorrow," remarked Tarzan.

When the next day dawned, the slave and the guard came with a large breakfast for the two prisoners, the best meal that had been served them since they had been imprisoned.

"Eat well," advised one of the warriors, "that you may have strength to fight a good fight for the entertainment of the queen. For one of you it is the last meal, so you had both better enjoy it to the full, since there is no telling for which one of you it is the last."

"It is the last for him," said Phobeg, jerking a thumb in the direction of Tarzan.

"It is thus that the betting goes," said the warrior, "but even so, one cannot always be sure. The stranger is a large man, and he looks strong."

An hour later a large detachment of warriors came and took Tarzan and Phobeg from the prison. They led them through the palace grounds and out into an avenue bordered by old trees.

Here were throngs of people waiting to see the start of the pageant, and companies of warriors standing at ease, leaning upon their spears. It was an interesting sight to Tarzan who had been so long confined in the gloomy prison.

Tarzan and Phobeg were escorted west along the avenue, and as they passed, the crowd commented upon them.

At the end of the avenue Tarzan saw the great bridge of gold that spanned the river. It was a splendid structure built entirely of the precious metal. Two golden lions of heroic size flanked the approach from the city, and as he was led across the bridge the ape-man saw two identical lions guarding the western end.

Out upon the plain that is called the Field of the Lions a crowd of spectators was filing toward a point about a mile from the city where many people were congregated, and toward this assemblage the detachment escorted the two gladiators. Here was a large, oval arena excavated to a depth of twenty or thirty feet in the floor of the plain. Upon the excavated earth piled symmetrically around the edges of the pit, and terraced from the plain level to the top, were arranged slabs of stone to serve as seats. At the east end of the arena was a wide ramp descending into it. Spanning the ramp was a low arch surmounted by the loges of the queen and high nobility.

As Tarzan passed beneath the arch and descended the ramp toward the arena he saw that nearly half the seats were already taken. The people were eating food that they had brought with them, and there was much laughter and talking. Evidently it was a gala day.

The warriors conducted the two men to the far end of the arena where a terrace had been cut part way up the sloping side of the arena, a wooden ladder leaning against the wall giving access to it. Here, upon this terrace, Tarzan and Phobeg were installed with a few warriors to serve as guards.

Presently, from the direction of the city, Tarzan heard the music of drums and trumpets.

"Here they come!" cried Phobeg.

"Who?" asked Tarzan.

"The queen and the lion men," replied his adversary.

"What are the lion men?" inquired Tarzan.

"They are the nobles," explained Phobeg. "Really only the hereditary nobles are members of the clan of lions, but we usually speak of all nobles as lion men. Erot is a noble because Nemone has created him one, but he is not a lion man, as he was not born a

noble."

Now the blaring of the trumpets and the beating of the drums burst with increased volume upon their ears, and Tarzan saw that the musicians were marching down the ramp into the arena at the far end of the great oval.

Behind the music marched a company of warriors, and from each spearhead fluttered a coloured pennon. It was a stirring and colourful picture but nothing to what followed.

A few yards to the rear of the warriors came a chariot of gold drawn by four maned lions, where, half-reclining upon a couch draped with furs and gaily coloured cloths, rode Nemone, the queen. Sixteen black slaves held the lions in leash, and at either side of the chariot marched six nobles resplendent in gold and ivory, while a huge black, marching behind, held a great red parasol over the queen, squatting upon little seats above the rear wheels of the chariot were two small blackamyors wffi thered fans above her.

At sight of the chariot and its royal occupant the people in the stands arose and then kneeled down in salute to their ruler, while wave after wave of applause rolled round the amphitheatre as the pageant slowly circled the arena.

Behind Nemone's chariot marched another company of warriors. These were followed by a number of gorgeously decorated wooden chariots, each drawn by two lions and driven by a noble, and following these marched a company of nobles on foot, while a third company of warriors brought up the rear.

When the column had circled the arena, Nemone quit her chariot and ascended to her loge above the ramp amid the continued cheering of the populace, the chariots driven by the nobles lined up in the centre of the arena, the royal guard formed across the entrance to the stadium, and the nobles who had no part in the games went to their private loges.

There followed then in quick succession contests in dagger throwing and in the throwing of spears, feats of strength and skill, and foot races.

When the minor sports were completed the chariot races began. Two drivers raced in each event, the distance being always the same, one lap of the arena, for lions cannot maintain high speed for great distances. After each race the winner received a pennon from

the queen, while the loser drove up the ramp and out of the stadium amid the hoots of the spectators. Then two more raced, and when the last pair had finished the winners paired off for new events. Thus, by elimination, the contestants were eventually reduced to two, winners in each event in which they had contested. This, then, was the premiere racing event of the day.

The winner of this final race was acclaimed champion of the day and was presented with a golden helmet by Nemone herself, and the crowd gave him a mighty ovation as he drove proudly around the arena and disappeared up the ramp beneath the arch of the queen, his golden helmet shining bravely in the sun.

"Now," said Phobeg in a loud voice, "the people are going to see something worth while. It is what they have been waiting for, and they will not be disappointed. If you have a god, fellow, pray to him, for you are about to die."

"Are you not going to permit me to run around the arena first while you chase me?" demanded Tarzan.

Chapter 9

"DEATH! DEATH!"

A score of slaves were busily cleaning up the arena following the departure of the lion-drawn chariots, the audience was standing and stretching itself, nobles were wandering from loge to loge visiting their friends. The sounds of many voices enveloped the stadium in one mighty discord. The period was one of intermission between events.

Now a trumpet sounded, and the warriors guarding Tarzan and Phobeg ordered them down into the arena and paraded them once around it that the people might compare the gladiators and choose a favourite. As they passed before the royal loge, Nemone leaned forward with half-closed eyes surveying the tall stranger and the squat Cathnean.

The two men were posted in the arena a short distance from the royal loge, and the captain of the stadium was giving them their instructions which were extremely simple: they were to remain inside the arena and try to kill one another with their bare hands, though the use of elbows, knees, feet, or teeth was not barred. There were no other rules governing the combat. The winner was to receive his freedom, though even this had been qualified by Nemone.

"When the trumpet sounds you may attack," said the captain of the stadium. "And may Thoos be with you."

Tarzan and Phobeg had been placed ten paces apart.

Now they stood waiting the signal. Phobeg swelled his chest and beat upon it with his fists; he flexed his arms, swelling the great muscles of his biceps until they stood out like great knotty balls; then he hopped about, warming up his leg muscles. He was attracting all the attention, and that pleased him excessively.

Tarzan stood quietly, his arms folded loosely across his chest, his muscles relaxed. He appeared totally unconscious of the presence of the noisy multitude or even of Phobeg, but he was not unconscious of anything that was transpiring about him. His eyes and his ears were alert; it would be Tarzan who would hear the first note of the trumpet's signal. Tarzan was ready!

The trumpet pealed, and Tarzan's eyes swung back to Phobeg. A strange silence fell upon the amphitheatre. The two men approached one another, Phobeg strutting and confident, Tarzan with the easy, graceful stride of a lion.

"Say your prayers, fellow!" shouted the temple guard. "I am going to kill you, but first I shall play with you for the amusement of Nemone."

Phobeg came closer and reached for Tarzan. The ape-man let him seize him by the shoulders; then Tarzan cupped his two hands and brought the heels of them up suddenly and with great force beneath Phobeg's chin and at the same time pushed the man from him. The great head snapped back, and the fellow's huge bulk hurtled backward a dozen paces, where Phobeg sat down heavily. A groan of surprise arose from the audience. Phobeg scrambled to his feet. His face was contorted with rage; in an instant he had gone berserk. With a roar, he charged the ape-man.

"No quarter!" he screamed. "I kill you now!"

"Don't you wish to throw me about a bit first?" asked Tarzan in a low voice, as he lightky side stepped the other's mad charge. "No!" screamed Phobeg, turning clumsily and charging again. "I kill! I kill!"

Tarzan Caught the outstretched hands and spread them wide; then a bronzed arm, lightning-like, clamped about Phobeg's short neck. The ape-man wheeled suddenly about, leaned forward, and hurled his antagonist over his head. Phobeg fell heavily to the sandy gravel of the arena.

Nemone leaned from the royal loge, her eyes flashing, her bosom

heaving. Phobeg arose but this time more slowly, nor did he charge again, but approached his antagonist warily. His tactics now were very different from what they had been. He wanted to get close enough to Tarzan to get a hold; that was all he desired, just a hold; then, he knew, he could crush the man with his great strength.

Perhaps the ape-man sensed what was in the mind of his foe, perhaps it was just chance that caused him to taunt Phobeg by holding his left wrist out to the other. Whatever it was, Phobeg seized upon the opportunity and, grasping Tarzan's wrist, sought to drag the ape-man into his embrace. Tarzan stepped in quickly, struck Phobeg a terrific blow in the face with his right fist, seized the wrist of the hand that held his, and, again whirling quickly beneath his victim, threw him heavily once more, using Phobeg's arm as a lever and his own shoulder as a fulcrum.

This time Phobeg had difficulty in arising at all. He came up slowly. The ape-man was standing over him.

Suddenly Tarzan stooped and seized Phobeg, and, lifting him bodily, held him above his head. "Shall I run now, Phobeg," he growled, "or are you too tired to chase me?" Then he hurled the man to the ground again a little nearer to the royal loge where Nemone sat, tense and thrilled.

Like a lion with its prey, the Lord of the Jungle followed the man who had taunted him and would have killed him; twice again he picked him up and hurled him closer to the end of the arena. Now the fickle crowd was screaming to Tarzan to kill Phobeg-Phobeg, the strongest man in Cathne.

Again Tarzan seized his antagonist and held him above his head. Phobeg struggled weakly, but he was quite helpless. Tarzan walked to the side of the arena near the royal loge and hurled the great body up into the audience.

"Take your strong man," he said; "Tarzan does not want him." Then he walked away and stood before the ramp, waiting, as though he demanded his freedom.

Amid shrieks and howls that called to Tarzan's mind only the foulest of wild beasts, the loathsome hyena, the crowd hurled the unhappy Phobeg back into the arena. "Kill him! Kill him!" they screamed.

Nemone leaned from her loge. "Kill him, Tarzan!" she cried.

"I shall not kill him," replied the ape-man.

Nemone arose in her loge. She was flushed and excited. "Tarzan!" she cried, and when the ape-man glanced up at her, "Why do you not kill him?"

"Why should I kill him?" he demanded. "He cannot harm me, and I kill only in self-defence or for food." Phobeg, bruised, battered, and helpless, arose weakly to his feet and stood reeling drunkenly. He heard the voice of the pitiless mob screaming for his death. He saw his antagonist standing a few paces away in front of the ramp, paying no attention to him, and dimly and as though from a great distance he had heard him refuse to kill him. He had heard, but he did not comprehend.

"Kill him, fellow!" Erot cried. "It's the queen's command."

The ape-man glanced up at the queen's favourite.

"Tarzan kills only whom it pleases him to kill." He spoke in a low voice that yet carried to the royal loge. "I shall not kill Phobeg."

"You fool," cried Erot, "do you not understand that it is the queen's wish, that it is the queen's command, which no one may disobey and live, that you kill the fellow?"

"If the queen wants him killled, why doesn't she send you down to do it? She is your queen, not mine." There was neither awe nor respect in the voice of the ape-man.

Erot looked horrified. He glanced at the queen. "Shall I order the guard to destroy the impudent savage?" he asked.

Nemone shook her head. Her countenance remained inscrutable, but a strange light burned in her eyes. "We give them both their lives," she said. "Set Phobeg free, and bring the other to me in the palace."

Chapter 10

IN THE PALACE OF THE QUEEN

A detachment of common warriors commanded by an under-officer had escorted Tarzan to the stadium, but he returned to the city in the company of nobles.

Congratulating him upon his victory, praising his prowess, asking innumerable questions, they followed him from the arena, and at the top of the ramp another noble accosted him. It was Gemnon.

"The queen has commanded me to accompany you to the city and look after you," he explained. "This evening I am to bring you to her in the palace, but in the meantime you will want to bathe and rest, and I imagine that you might welcome some decent food after the prison fare you have been eating recently.

"I shall be glad of a bath and good food," replied Tarzan, "but why should I rest? I have been doing nothing else for several days."

"But you have just come through a terrific battle for your life!" exclaimed Gemnon. "You must be tired."

Tarzan shrugged his broad shoulders. "Perhaps you had better look after Phobeg instead," he replied. "It is he who needs rest; I am not tired."

Gemnon laughed. "Phobeg should consider himself lucky to be alive. If anyone looks after him, it will be himself."

As they were walking toward the city now. The other nobles had joined their own parties or had dropped behind, and Gemnon and Tarzan were alone, if two may be said to be alone who are

surrounded by a chattering mob through which bodies of armed men and lion-drawn chariots are making their slow way.

"You are popular now," commented Gemnon.

"A few minutes ago they were screaming at Phobeg to kill me," Tarzan reminded him.

"I am really surprised that they are so friendly," remarked Gemnon. "You cheated them of a death, the one thing they are all hoping to see when they go to the stadium. It is for this they pay their lepta for admission."

When they reached the city, Gemnon took Tarzan to his own quarters in the palace. These consisted of a bedroom and bath in addition to a living room that was shared with another officer. Here Tarzan found the usual decorations of weapons and shields, in addition to pictures painted on leather. He saw no books, nor any other printed matter; neither was there any sign of writing materials in the rooms. He wanted to question Gemnon on this subject, but he found that he had never learned any word for writing or for a written language.

The bath interested the ape-man. The tub was a coffin-like affair made of clay and baked. The plumbing fixtures were apparently all of solid gold. While questioning Gemnon he learned that the water was brought from the mountains east of the city through clay pipes of considerable size and distributed by means of pressure tanks distributed throughout all of urban Cathne. Gemnon summoned a slave to prepare the bath, and when Tarzan had finished, a meal was awaiting him in the living room. While he was eating, and Gemnon lounged near in conversation, another young noble entered the apartment. He had a narrow face and rather unpleasant eyes, nor was he overly cordial when Gemnon introduced him to Tarzan.

"Xerstle and I are quartered together," Gemnon explained.

"I have orders to move out," snapped Xerstle.

"Why is that?" asked Gemnon.

"To make room for your friend here," replied Xerstle sourly, and then he went into his own room mumbling something about slaves and savages.

"He does not seem pleased," remarked Tarzan.

"But I am," replied Gemnon in a low voice. "Xerstle and I have not

gotten along well together. We have nothing in common. He is one of Erot's friends and was elevated from nothing after Erot became Nemone's favourite. He is the son of a foreman at the mines. If they had elevated his father he would have been an acquisltion to the nobility, for he is a splendid man, but Xerstle is a rat-like his friend, Erot."

"I have heard something of your nobility," said Tarzan. "I understand that there are two classes of nobles, and that one class rather looks upon the other with contempt even though a man of the lower class may hold a higher title than many of those in the other class."

"We do not look upon them with contempt if they are worthy men," replied Gemnon. "The old nobility, the lion men of Cathne, is hereditary; the other is but temporary—for the lifetime of the man who has received it as a special mark of favour from the throne. In one respect at least it reflects greater glory on its possessor than does hereditary nobility, as it is often the deserved reward of merit. I am a noble by accident of birth; had I not been born a noble I might never have become one. I am a lion man because my father was; I may own lions because, beyond the memory of man, an ancient ancestor of mine led the king's lions to battle."

"What did Erot do to win his patent of nobility?" continued the ape-man.

Gemnon grimaced. "Whatever services he has rendered have been tiersonal; he has never served the state with distinction. If he owns any distinction, it is that of being the prince of flatterers, the king of sycophants."

"Your queen seems to intelligent a woman to be duped by flattery."

"No one is, always!"

"There are no flatterers among the beasts," said Tarzan.

"What do you mean by that?" demanded Gemnon.

"Erot is almost a beast."

"You malign the beasts. Did you ever see a lion that fawned upon another creature to curry favour?"

Xerstle, entering from his room, interrupted their conversation. "I have gathered my things together," he said; "I shall send a slave for

them presently." His manner was short and brusque. Gemnon merely nodded in assent, and Xerstle departed.

"He does not seem pleased," commented the ape-man.

"May Xarator have him!" ejaculated Gemnon.

"Though he would serve a better purpose as food for my lions," he added as an afterthought, "if they would eat him."

"You own lions?" inquired Tarzan.

"Certainly," replied Gemnon. "I am a lion man and must own lions. It is a caste obligation. Each lion man must own lions of war to fight in the service of the queen. I have five. In times of peace I use them for hunting and racing. Only royalty and the lion men may own lions." The sun was setting behind the mountains that rimmed the western edge of the Field of the Lions as a slave entered the apartment with a lighted cresset which he hung at the end of a chain depending from the ceiling.

"It is time for the evening meal," announced Gemnon, rising.

"I have eaten," replied Tarzan.

"Come anyway; it may interest you to meet the other nobles of the palace."

Tarzan arose. "Very well," he said and followed Gemnon from the apartment.

Forty nobles were assembled in a large dining room on the main floor of the palace as Gemnon and Tarzan entered. Tomos was there and Erot and Xerstle; several of the others Tarzan also recognized as having been seen by him before, either in the council room or at the stadium.

A sudden silence fell upon the assemblage as he entered, as though the men had been interrupted while discussing either him or Gemnon.

"This is Tarzan," announced Gemnon by way of introduction as he led the ape-man to the table.

Tomos, who sat at the head of the table, did not appear pleased. Erot was scowling; it was he who spoke first. "This table is for nobles," he said, "not for slaves."

"By his own prowess and the grace of her majesty, the queen, this man is here as my guest," said Gemnon quietly. "If one of my equals

takes exception to his presence, I will be glad to discuss the matter with swords." He turned to Tarzan. "Because this man sits at table with nobles of my own rank, I apologize for the inference he intended you to draw from his words. I hope you are not offended."

"Does the jackal offend the lion?" asked the ape-man.

The meal was not a complete success socially. Erot and Xerstle whispered together. Tomos did not speak but applied himself assiduously to the business of eating. Several of Gemnon's friends engaged Tarzan in conversation, and he found one or two of them agreeable, but others were inclined to be patronizing. Possibly they would have been surprised and their attitude toward him different had they known that their guest was a peer of England, but then again this might have made little impression upon them inasmuch as none of them had ever heard of England.

When Tomos arose and the others were free to go, Gemnon conducted Tarzan to the apartments of the queen After returning to his awn apartments to don a more elaborate habergeon, helmet, and equipments.

"Do not forget to kneel when we enter the presence of Nemone", cautioned Gemnon, "and do not speak until she addresses you." A noble received them in a small anteroom whetre he left them while he went to announce their presence to the queen, and as they waited Gemnon's eyes watched the tall stranger standing quietly near him.

"Have you no nerves?" he asked presently.

"What do you mean?" demanded the ape-man.

"I have seen the bravest warriors tremble who had been summoned before Nemone," explained his companion.

"I have never trembled," replied Tarzan. "How is it done?"

"Perhaps Nemone will teach you to tremble."

"Perhaps, but why should I tremble to go where a jackal does not tremble to go?"

"I do not understand what you mean by that," said Gemnon, puzzled.

"Erot is in there."

Gemnon grinned. "But how do you know that?" he asked.

"I know," said Tarzan. He did not think it necessary to explain that when the noble had opened the door his sensitive nostrils had caught the scent spoor of the queen's favourite.

"I hope not," said Gemnon, an expression of concern upon his countenance. "If he is there, this may be a trap from which you will never come out alive."

"One might fear the queen," replied Tarzan, "but not the jackal."

"It is the queen of whom I was thinking."

The noble returned to the anteroom. He nodded to Tarzan. "Her majesty will receive you now," he said.

"You may go, Gemnon; your attendance will not be required." Then he turned to the ape-man once more.

"When I open the door and announce you, enter the room and kneel. Remain kneeling until the queen tells you to arise, and do not speak until after her majesty addresses you. Do you hear?"

"I hear," replied Tarzan. "Open the door!"

Gemnon, just leaving the anteroom by another doorway, heard and smiled, but the noble did not smile. He frowned.

The bronzed giant had spoken to him in a tone of command, but the noble did not know what to do about it, so he opened the door. But he got some revenge, or at least he thought that he did.

"The slave, Tarzan!" he announced in a loud voice.

The Lord of the Jungle stepped into the adjoining chamber, crossed to the centre of it, and stood erect, silently regarding Nemone. He did not kneel. Erot was there standing at the foot of a couch upon which the queen reclined upon fat pillows. The queen regarded Tarzan from her deep eyes without any change of expression, but Erot scowled angrily.

"Kneel, you fool!" he commanded.

"Silence!" admonished Nemone. "It is I who give commands."

Erot flushed and fingered the golden hilt of his sword. Tarzan neither spoke nor moved nor took his eyes from the eves of Nemone. Though he had thought her beautiful before, he realized now that she was even more gorgeous than he had believed it possible for any woman to be.

"I shall not need you again tonight, Erot," said Nemone. "You may

go now."

Now Erot paled and then turned fiery red. He started to speak but thought better of it; then he backed to the doorway, executed a bow that brought him to one knee, arose and departed.

As Tarzan had crossed the threshold, his observing eyes noted every detail of the room's interior almost in a single sweeping glance. The chamber was not large, but magnificent in its conception and its appointments. Columns of gold suppoted the ceiling, the walls were Tiled with ivory, the floor a mosaic of coloured stones upon Which were scattered rugs of coloured stuff and the skins of animals.

On the walls were paintings, for the most part very crude, and the usual array of heads, and at one end of the room a great lion was chained between two of the goolden Doric columns. He was a very large lion with a tuft of white hair in his mane directly in the centre of the back of his neck.

From the instant that Tarzan entered the room the lion eyed him malevolently, and Erot had scarcely passed out and closed the door behind him when the beast sprang to his feet with a terrific roar and leaped at the ape-man. The chains stopped him and he dropped down, growling.

"Belthar does not like you," said Nemone who had remained unmoved when the beast sprang. She noticed, too, that Tarzan had not started nor given any other indication that he had heard the lion or seen him, and she was pleased.

"He but reflects the attitude of all Cathne," replied Tarzan.

"That is not true," contradicted Nemone.

"No?"

"I like you." Nemone's voice was low and caressing.

"You defied me before my people at the stadium today, but I did not have you destroyed. Do you suppose that I should have permitted you to live if I had not liked you? You do not kneel to me. No one else in the world has ever refused to do that and lived. I have never seen a man like you. I do not understand you, I am beginning to think that I do not understand myself. You have piqued my curiosity, Tarzan."

"And when that is satisfied you will kill me, perhaps?" asked

Tarzan, a half-smile curving his lip.

"Perhaps," admitted Nemone with a low laugh. "Come here and sit down beside me. I want to talk with you; I want to know more about you."

"I shall see that you do not learn too much," Tarzan assured her as he crossed to the couch and seated himself facing her, while Belthar growled and strained at his chains.

"In your own country you are no slave," said Nemone.

"But I do not need to ask that; your every act has proved ft. Perhaps you are a king?"

Tarzan shook his head. "I am Tarzan," he said, as though that explained everything, setting him above kings.

"Are you a lion man? You must be," insisted the queen. "It would not make me better or worse, so what difference does it make? You might make Erot a king, but he would still be Erot."

A sudden frown darkened Nemone's countenance.

"What do you mean by that?" she demanded. There was a suggestion of anger in her tone.

"I mean that a title of nobility does not make a man noble. You may call a jackal a lion, but he will still be a jackal."

"Do you not know that I am supposed to be very fond of Erot," she demanded, "or that you may drive my patience too far?"

Tarzan shrugged. "You show execrable taste."

Nemone sat up very straight. Her eyes flashed. "I should have you killed!" she cried. Tarzan said nothing. He just kept his eyes on hers. She could not tell whether or not he was laughing at her. Finally she sank back on her pillows with a gesture of resignation. "What is the use?" she demanded. "You probably would not let me get any satisfaction from killing you anyway, and by this time I should be accustomed to being affronted. Now answer my question. Are you a lion man in your own country?"

"I am a noble," replied the ape-man, "but I can tell you that means little; a ditch digger may become a noble if he controls enough votes, or a rich brewer if he subscribes a large amount of money to the political party in power."

"And which were you," demanded Nemone, "a ditch digger or a

rich brewer?"

"Neither," laughed Tarzan.

"Then why are you a noble?" insisted the queen.

"For even less reason than either of those," admitted the ape-man. "I am a noble through no merit of my own but by an accident of birth; my family for many generations has been noble."

"Ah!" exclaimed Nemone. "It is just as I thought; you are a lion man!"

"And what of it?" demanded Tarzan.

"It simplifies matters," she explained, but she did not amplify the explanation nor did Tarzan either understand or inquire as to its implication. As a matter of fact he was not greatly interested in the subject.

Nemone extended a hand and laid it on his, a soft, warm hand that trembled just a little. "I am going to give you your freedom," she said, "but on one condition."

"And what is that?" asked the ape-man.

"That you remain here, that you do not try to leave Onthar-or me." Her voice was eager and just a little husky, as though she spoke under suppressed emotion.

Tarzan remained silent. He would not promise, and so he did not speak.

"I will make you a noble of Cathne," whispered Nemone. She was sitting erect now, her face close to Tarzan's. "I will have made for you helmets of gold and habergeons of ivory, the most magnificent in Cathne. I will give you lions, fifty, a hundred! You shall be the richest, the most powerful noble of my court!"

"I do not want such things," Tarzan said.

And then a door at the far end of the chamber opened and a Negress entered. She had been very tall, but now she was old and bent; her scraggly wool was scant and white. Her withered lips were twisted into something that might have been either a snarl or a grin, revealing her toothless gums. She stood in the doorwa leaning upon a staff and shaking her head, an ancient palsied hag.

At the interruption Nemtne straightened looked around. The expression that had softened her countenance was swept away a

sudden wave of rage, inartictulate but no less terrible.

The old hag tapped upon the floor with her staff; her head nodded ceaselessly like that of some grotesque and horrible doll, and her lips were still contorted in what Tarzan realized now was no smile but a hideous snarl.

"Come!" she cackled. "Come! Come! Come!"

Nemone sprang to her feet and faced the woman.

"M'duze!" she screamed. "I could kill you! I could tear you to pieces! Get out of here!"

But the old woman only tapped with her staff and cackled, "Come! Come! Come!"

Slowly Nemone approached her. As one drawn by an invisible and irresistible power, the queen crossed the chamber, the old hag stepped aside, and the queen passed on through the doorway into the darkness of a corridor beyond. The old woman turned her eyes upon Tarzan, and, snarling, backed through the door after Nemone. Noiselessly the door closed behind them.

Tarzan had arisen as Nemone arose. For an instant he hesitated and then took a step toward the doorway in pursuit of the queen and the old hag. Then he heard a door open and a step behind him, and turned to see the noble who had ushered him into Nemone's presence standing just within the threshold.

"You may return to the quarters of Gemnon," announced the noble politely.

Tarzan shook himself as might a lion; he drew a palm across his eves as one whose vision has been clouded by a mist. Then he drew a deep sigh and moved towards the doorway as the noble stepped aside to let him pass, but whether it was a sigh of relief or regret, who may say?

As the Lord of the Jungle passed out of the chamber, Belthar sprang to the ends of his chains with a thunderous roar.

Chapter 11

THE LIONS OF CATHNE

When Gemnon entered the living room of their quarters the morning after Tarzan's audience with Nemone, he found the ape-man standing by the window looking out over the palace grounds.

"I am glad to see you here this morning," said the Cathnean.

"And surprised, perhaps," suggested the Lord of the Jungle.

"I should not have been surprised had you never returned," replied Gemnon. "How did she receive you? And Erot? I suppose he was glad to have you there!"

Tarzan smiled. "He did not appear to be, but it did not matter much as the queen sent him away immediately." "And you were alone with her all evening?" Gemnon appeared incredulous.

"Belthar and I," Tarzan corrected him. "Belthar does not seem to like me any better than Erot does."

"Yes, Belthar would be there," commented Gemnon. "She usually has him chained near her. But do not be offended if he does not like you; Belthar likes no one. Belthar is a man-eater. How did Nemone treat you?"

"She was gracious." Tarzan assured him, and that, too, notwithstanding the first thing I did was to offend her royal majesty."

"And what was that?" demanded Gemnon.

"I remained standing when I should have knelt," explained

Tarzan.

"But I told you to kneel!" exclaimed Gemnon.

"So did the noble at the door."

"And you forgot?"

"No."

"You refused to kneel? And she did not have you destroyed! It is incredible."

"But it is true, and she offered to make me a noble and give me a hundred lions."

Gemnon shook his head. "What enchantment have you worked to so change Nemone?"

"None; it was I who was under a spell. I have told you these things because I do not understand them. You are the only friend I have in Cathne, and I come to you for an explanation of much that was mysterious in my visit to the queen last night. I doubt that I or another can ever understand the woman herself. She can be tender or terrible, weak or strong within the span of a dozen seconds. One moment she is the autocrat, the next the obedient vassal of a slave."

"Ah!" exclaimed Gemnon. "So you saw M'duze! I'll warrant she was none too cordial."

"No," admitted the ape-man. "As a matter of fact, she did not pay any attention to me; she just ordered Nemone out of the room, and Nemone went. The remarkable feature of the occurrence lies in the fact that, though the queen did not want to leave and was very angry about it, she obeyed the old woman meekly."

"There are many legends surrounding M'duze," said Gemnon, "but there is one that is whispered more often than the others, though you may rest assured that it is only whispered and, at that, only among trusted friends.

"M'duze has been a slave in the royal family since the days of Nemone's grandfather. She was only a child then, a few years older than the king's son, Nemone's father. The oldsters recall that she was a fine-looking young woman, and the legend that is only whispered is that Nemone is her daughter.

"About a year after Nemone was born, in the tenth year of her father's reign, the queen died under peculiar and suspicious circumstances. Her child, a son, was born just before the queen

expired. He was named Alextar, and he still lives."

"Then why is he not king?" demanded Tarzan.

"That is a long story of mystery and court intrigue and murder, perhaps, of which more is surmised than is actually known by more than two now living. Perhaps Nemone knows, but that is doubtful, though she must guess close to the truth.

"Immediately following the death of the queen the influence of M'duze increased and became more apparent. M'duze favoured Tomos, a noble of little or no importance at the time, and from that day the influence and power of Tomos grew. Then, about a year after the death of the queen, the king died. It was so obvious that he had been poisoned that a revolt of the nobles was barely averted; but Tomos, guided by M'duze, conciliated them by fixing the guilt upon a slave woman of whom M'duze was jealous and executing her.

"For ten years Tomos ruled as regent for the boy, Alextar. During this time he had, quite naturally, established his own following in important positions in the palace and in the council. Alextar was adjudged insane and imprisoned in the temple; Nemone, at the age of twelve, was crowned queen of Cathne."

Erot is a creature of M'duze and Tomos, a situation has produced a mix-up that would be amusing were it not so tragic. Tomos wishes to marry Nemone, but M'duze will not permit it. M'duze wishes Nemone to Marry Erot, but Erot is not a lion man, and, so far, the Queen has refused to break this ancient custom that requires the ruler to marry into this highest class of Cathneans. M'duze is insistant upon the marriage because she can control Erot, and she discourages and interest which Nemone may manifest in other men, which undoubtedly accounts for her having interrupted the queen's visit with you.

"You may rest assured that M'duze is your enemy, and it may be of value to you to recall that whoever has stood in the old hag's path has died a violent death. Beware of M'duze and Tomos and Erot, and, as a friend, I may say to you in confidence, beware of Nemone, also. And now let us forget the cruel and sordid side of Cathne and go for that walk I promised you for this morning, that you may see the beauty of the city and the riches of her citizens."

Along avenues bordered by old trees Gemnon led Tarzan between

the low, white and gold homes of nobles, glimpses of which were discernible only occasionally through grilled gateways in the walls that enclosed their spacious grounds. For a mile they walked along the stone-flagged street. Passing nobles greeted Gemnon, some nodding to his companion. Artisans, tradesmen, and slaves stopped to stare at the strange, bronzed giant who had overthrown the strongest man in Cathne.

Then they came to a high wall that separated this section of the city from the next. Massive gates, swung wide now and guarded by warriors, opened into a portion of the city inhabited by better class artisans and tradesmen. Their grounds were less spacious, their houses smaller and plainer, but evidences of prosperity and even affluence were apparent everywhere.

Beyond this was a meaner district, yet even here all was orderly and neat, nor was there any sign of abject poverty in either the people or their homes. Here, as in the other portions of the city, they occasionally met a tame lion either wandering about or lying before the gate of its master's grounds.

As the two men talked they continued on toward the centre of the city until they came to a large square that was bounded on all sides by shops. Here were many people. All classes from nobles to slaves mingled before the shops and in the great open square of the market place.

There were lions held by slaves who were exhibiting them for sale for their noble masters who dickered with prospective purchasers, other nobles. Near the lion market was the slave block, and as slaves, unlike lions, might be owned by anyone, there was brisk bidding on the part of many wishing to buy. A huge black Galla was on the block as Tarzan and Gemnon paused to watch the scene.

"For all the interest he shows," remarked Tarzan, "one might think that being sold like a piece of merchandise or a bullock was a daily occurrence in his life."

"Not quite daily," replied Gemnon, "but no novelty. He has been sold many times. I know him well; I used to own him."

"Look at him!" shouted the seller. "Look at those arms! Look at those legs! Look at that back! He is as strong as an elephant, and not a blemish on him. Sound as a lion's tooth he is; never ill a day

in his life. And docile! A child can handle him."

"He is so refractory that no one can handle him," commented Gemnon in a whisper to the ape-man. "That is the reason I had to get rid of him; that is the reason he is up for sale so often."

"There seem to be plenty of customers interested in him," observed Tarzan.

"Do you see that slave in the red tunic?" asked Gemnon. "He belongs to Xerstle, and he is bidding on that fellow. He knows all about him, too. He knew him when the man belonged to me."

"Then why does he want to buy him? "asked the ape-man.

"I do not know, but there are other uses to which a slave may be put than labour. Xerstle may not care what sort of a disposition the fellow has or even whether he will work."

It was Xerstle's slave who bought the Galla as Tarzan and Gemnon moved on to look at the goods displayed in the shops. There were many articles of leather, wood, ivory, or gold; there were dagger-swords, spears, shields, habergeons, helmets, and sandals. One shop displayed nothing but articles of apparel for women; another, perfumes and incense. There were jewellery shops, vegetable shops, and meat shops. The last displayed dried meats and fish and the carcasses of goats and sheep. The fronts of these shops were heavily barred to prevent passing lions from raiding them, Gemnon explained.

Wherever Tarzan went he attracted attention, and a small crowd always followed him, for he had been recognized the moment that he had entered the market place.

"Let's get out of here," suggested the Lord of the Jungle. "I do not like crowds."

"Suppose we go back to the palace and look at the queen's lions," said Gemnon.

"I would rather look at lions than people," Tarzan assured him.

The war lions of Cathne were kept in stables within the royal grounds at a considerable distance from the palace. The building was of stone neatly laid and painted white. In it each lion had his separate cage, and outside were yards surrounded by high stone walls near the tops of which pointed sticks, set close together and inclined downward on the inside of the walls, kept the lions from

escaping. In these yards the lions exercised themselves.

There was another, larger arena where they were trained by a corps of keepers under the supervision of nobles; here the racing lions were taught to obey the commands of the hunter, to trail, to charge, to retrieve.

As Tarzan entered the stable a familiar scent spoor impinged upon his nostrils. "Belthar is here," he remarked to Gemnon. "It is possible," replied the noble, "but I don't understand how you know it."

As they were walking along in front of the cages inspecting the lions that were inside, Gemnon, who was in advance, suddenly halted. "How do you do it?" he demanded. "Last night you knew that Erot was with Nemone, though you could not see him and no one could have informed you, and now you knew that Belthar was here, and sure enough, he is."

Tarzan approached and stood beside Gemnon, and the instant that Belthar's eyes fell upon him the beast leaped against the bars of his cage in an effort to seize the ape-man, at the same time voicing an angry roar that shook the building.

Instantly keepers came running to the spot, certain that something had gone amiss, but Gemnon assured them that it was only Belthar exhibiting his bad temper.

"He does not like me," said Tarzan.

"If he ever got you, he would make short work of you," said a head keeper.

"It is evident that he would like to," replied the ape-man.

"He is a bad one and a man-killer," said Gemnon after the keepers had departed, "but Nemone will not have him destroyed. Occasionally he is loosed in the palace arena with someone who has incurred Nemone's disfavour; thus she derives pleasure from the sufferings of the culprit.

"Formerly he was her best hunting lion, but the last time he was used he killed four men and nearly escaped. He has already eaten three keepers who ventured into the arena with him, and he will eat more before good firtune rids us of him. Nemone is supposed to entertain a superstition that In some peculiar way her life and the life of Belthar are linked in some mysterious, supernatural bond and

that when one dies the other must die. Naturall, under the circumstances, it is neither politic or safe to suggest that she destroy the old devil. It is odd that he has concieved such a violent dislike for you."

"I have met lions before which did not like me," said Tarzan.

"May you never meet Belthar in the open, my friend!"

Chapter 12

THE MAN IN THE LION PIT

As Tarzan and Gemnon turned away from Belthar's cage a slave approached the ape-man and addressed him.

"Nemone, the queen, commands your presence immediately," he said. "You are to come to the ivory room; the noble Gemnon will wait in the anteroom. These are the commands of Nemone, the queen."

"What now, I wonder!" exclaimed Tarzan as they walked through the royal grounds toward the palace.

"No one ever knows why he is summoned to an audience with Nemone until he gets there," commented Gemnon. "One may be going to receive an honour or hear his death sentence. Nemone is capricious. She is always bored and always seeking relief from her boredom. Oftentimes she finds strange avenues of escape that make one wonder if her mind—but no! Such thoughts may not even be whispered among friends."

When Tarzan presented himself he was immediately admitted to the ivory room, where he found Nemone and Erot much as he had found them the preceding night. Nemone greeted him with a smile that was almost pathetically eager, but Erot only scowled darkly, making no effort to conceal his growing hatred.

"We are having a diversion this morning," Nemone explained, "and we summoned you and Gemnon enjoy it with us. A party raiding in Thenar a day or ago captured an Athnean noble. We are

going to have to some sport with him this morning."

Tarzan nodded. He did not understand what she meant, and he was not particularly interested.

Nemone turned to Erot. "Go and tell them we are ready," she directed, "and ascertain if all is in readiness for us."

Erot flushed and backed toward the door, still scowling.

"It shall be as the queen commands," replied Erot in a surly tone.

When the door had closed behind him, Nemone motioned Tarzan to a seat upon the couch. "I am afraid that Erot does not like you," she said, smiling. "He is furious that you do not kneel to me, and that I do not compel you to do so. I really do not know, myself, why I do not."

"There might be two reasons, either of which would be sufficient," replied the ape-man.

"And what are they? I have been curious to know how you explained it."

"Consideration of the customs of a stranger and courtesy to a guest," suggested Tarzan.

Nemone considered for a moment. "Yes," she admitted, "either is a fairly good reason, but neither is really in keeping with the customs of the court of Nemone. And then they are practically the same thing, so they constitute only one reason. Is there not another?"

"Yes," replied Tarzan. "There is an even better one, the one which probably influences you to overlook my dereliction."

"And what is it?"

"The fact that you cannot make me kneel."

A hard look flashed in the queen's eyes; it was not the answer had been hoping for. Tarzan's eyes did not leave hers: she saw amusement in them. "Oh, why do I endure it!" she cried, and with the query her anger melted. You should not try to make it so hard for me to be nice to you," she said almost appealingly.

"I wish to be nice to you, Nemone," he replied, "but not at the price of my self-respect. But that is not the only reason why I shall never kneel to you."

"What is the other reason?" she demanded.

"That I wish you to like me. You would not like me if I cringed to

you."

"Perhaps you are right," she admitted musingly.

"Everyone cringes, until the sight of it disgusts me, yet I am angry when they do not cringe. Why is that?"

"You will be offended if I tell you," warned the ape-man.

"In the past two days I have become accustomed to being offended," she replied with a grimace of resignation, "so you might as well tell me."

"You are angry if they do not cringe, because you are not quite sure of yourself. You wish this outward evidence of their subservience that you may be constantly reassured that you are queen of Cathne."

"Who says that I am not queen of Cathne?" she demanded, instantly on the defensive. "Who says that will find that I am and that I have the power of life and death."

"You do not impress me," said Tarzan. "I have not said that you are not queen of Cathne, only that your manner may often suggest your own doubts. A queen should be so sure of herself that she can always afford to be gracious and merciful."

For a while Nemone sat in silence, evidently pondering the thought that Tarzan had suggested. "They would not understand," she said at last. "If I were gracious and merciful they would think me weak; then they would take advantage of me, and eventually they would destroy me.

"Oh, Tarzan, I wish that you would promise to remain in Cathne. If you will, there is nothing that you may not have from Nemone. I would build you a palace second only to my own. I would be very good to you. We-you could be very happy here."

The ape-man shook his head. "Tarzan can be happy in the jungle only."

Nemone leaned close to him; she seized him fiercely by the shoulders. "I will make you happy here," she whispered.

"Erot and M'duze and Tomos may think differently," Tarzan reminded her.

"I hate them!" cried Nemone. "If they interfere this time, I shall kill them all!"

The door opened and Erot entered unceremoniously; he knelt, but the act was nearer a gesture than an accomplished fact. Nemone flashed an angry look at him.

"Before you enter our presence," she said coldly, "see to it that you are properly announced and that we have expressed a desire to receive you.

"But your majesty," objected Erot, "have I not been in the habit of-"

"You have gotten into bad habits," she interrupted; "see that you mend them. Is the diversion arranged?"

"All is in readiness, your majesty," replied the crestfallen Erot.

"Come, then!" directed Nemone, motioning Tarzan to follow her.

In the anteroom they found Gemnon waiting, and the Iueen bid him accompany them. Preceded and followed by armed guards, they passed along several corridors and through a number of rooms, then up a stairway to the second floor of the palace. Here they were conducted to a balcony overlooking a small enclosed court. The windows opening onto this court from the first storey of the building were heavily barred, and from just below the top of the parapet, behind which the queen and her party sat, sharpened stakes protruded, giving the court the appearance of a miniature arena for wild animals.

As Tarzan Looked down into the courtyard, wondering a little what the nature of the diversion was to be, a door at one end swung open and a young lion stepped out into the sunlight, blinking his eyes and looking about. When he saw those on the balcony looking down at him, he growled.

"He is going to make a good lion," remarked Nemone. "From a cub, he has been vicious."

"What is he doing in here," asked Tarzan, "or what is he going to do?"

"He is going to entertain us," replied Nemone. "Presently an enemy of Cathne will be turned into the pit with him, the Athnean who was captured in Thenar."

"And if he kills the lion you will give him his liberty?" demanded Tarzan.

Nemone laughed. "I promise that I will, but he will not kill the

lion."

"He might," said Tarzan; "men have killed lions before."

"With their bare hands?" asked Nemone.

"You mean the man will not be armed?" demanded Tarzan incredulously.

"Why, of course not!" exclaimed Nemone. "He is not being put in there to kill or wound a fine young lion but to be killed."

"And he has no chance, then! That is not sport; it is murder!"

"Perhaps you would like to go down and defend him," sneered Erot. "The queen would give the fellow his liberty if he had a champion who would kill the lion, for that is the custom."

"It is a custom that is without a precedent since I have been queen," said Nemone. "It is true that it is a law of the arena, but I have yet to see a champion volunteer to take the risk."

The lion paced across the courtyard and stood directly beneath the balcony, glaring up at them. He was a splendid beast, young but full-grown.

"He is going to be a mean customer," remarked Gemnon.

"He already is," rejoined the queen. "I was going to make a racing lion of him, but after he killed a couple of trainers I decided that he would make a better hunting lion for grand hunts. There is the Athnean." She pointed down into the courtyard. "He is a fine-looking young fellow."

Tarzan glanced at the stalwart figure in ivory standing upon the opposite side of the small arena bravely awaiting its fate; then the lion turned its head slowly in the direction of the prey it had not yet seen. At the same instant Tarzan seized the hilt of Erot's dagger-like sword, tore the weapon from its sheath, and, stepping to the top of the parapet, leaped for the lion below.

So quickly and so silently had he moved that none was aware of his intent until it had been accomplished. Gemnon voiced an ejaculation of astonishment; Erot, of relief; while Nemone cried out in genuine terror and alarm. Leaning over the parapet, the queen saw the lion struggling to tear the body that had crushed it to the stone flagging, or escape from beneath it. The horrid growls of the beast reverberated in the narrow confines of the pit, and mingled with them were the growls of the beast-man on its back. One

bronzed arm was about the maned neck of the carnivore, two powerful legs were locked around its middle, and the sharp point of Erot's sword was awaiting the opportune instant to plunge into the savage heart. The Athnean was running towards the two embattled beasts.

"By Thoos!" exclaimed Nemone. "If the lion kills him, I will have it torn limb from limb. It must not kill him! Go down there, Erot, and help him. Go, Gemnon."

Gemnon did not wait, but springing to the parapet, lowered himself by the stakes and dropped into the courtyard. Erot hung back. "Let him take care of himself," he grumbled.

Nemone turned to the guard standing behind her. She was white with apprehension because of Tarzan an: with rage and disgust at Erot. "Throw him into the pit" she commanded, pointing at the cringing favourite. But Erot did not wait to be thrown, and a moment later he had followed Gemnon to the courtyard.

Neither Erot nor Gemnon nor the man from Athne was needed to save Tarzan from the lion, for already he had sunk the sword into the tawny side. Twice again the point drove into the wild heart before the roaring beast collapsed upon the white stones, and its great voice was stilled forever.

Then Tarzan rose to his feet. For a moment the men about him, the queen leaning across the parapet above, the city of gold, all were forgotten. Here was no English lord, but a beast of the jungle that had made its kill. With one foot upon the carcass of the lion, the ape-man raised his face towards the heavens, and from the heart of the palace of Nemone rose the hideous victory cry of the bull ape that has killed.

Gemnon and Erot shuddered, and Nemone drew back in terror. But the Athnean was unmoved; he had heard that savage challenge before. He was Valthor. And now Tarzan turned; all the savagery faded from his countenance as he stretched forth a hand and laid it on Valthor's shoulder. "We meet again, my friend," he said.

"And once again you save my life!" exclaimed the Athnean noble.

The two men had spoken in low tones that had not carried to the ears of Nemone or the others in the balcony; Erot, fearful that the lion might not be dead, had run to the far end of the court, where he was cowering behind a column; that Gemnon might have heard

did not concern Tarzan, who trusted the young Cathnean. But those others must not know that he had known Valthor before, or immediately the old story that Tarzan had come from Athne to assassinate Nemene would be revived and then a miracle could save either them.

His hand still upon Valthor's shoulder, Tarzan spoke again rapidly in a whisper. "They must not know that we are acquainted," he said. "They are looking for an excuse to kill me, some of them, but as far as you are concerned they do not have to look for any."

Nemone was now calling orders rapidly to those about her. "Go down and let Tarzan out of the arena; Tarzan and Gemnon, send them to me. Erot may go to his quarters until I give further orders; I do not wish to see him again. Take the Athnean back to his cell; later I will decide how he shall be destroyed."

Tarzan heard the queen's commands with surprise and resentment, and, wheeling, he looked up at her. "This man is free by your own word," he reminded her. "If he be returned to a cell, I shall go with him, for I have told him that he would be free."

"Do with him as you please," cried Nemone; "he is yours. Only come up to me, Tarzan. I thought that you would be killed, and I am still frightened." Erot and Gemnon heard these words with vastly different emotions. Each recognized that they signalized a change in the affairs of the court of Cathne. Gemnon anticipated the effects of a better influence injected into the councils of Nemone, and was pleased. Erot saw the flimsy structure of his temporary grandeur and reflected authority crumbling to ruin. Both were astonished by this sudden revealment of a new Nemone, whom none had ever before seen bow to the authority of other than M'duze.

Accompanied by Gemnon and Valthor, Tarzan returned to the balcony where Nemone, her composure regained, awaited them. For a moment, moved by excitement and apprehension for Tarzan's safety, she had revealed a feminine side of her character that few of her intimates might even have suspected she possessed, but now she was the queen again. She surveyed Valthor haughtily and yet with interest.

"What is your name, Athnean?" she demanded.

"Valthor," he replied and added, "of the house of Xanthus."

"We know the house," remarked Nemone. "Its head is a king's councillor; a most noble house and close to the royal line in both blood and authority."

"My father is the head of the house of Xanthus," said Valthor.

"You would have made a noble hostage," sighed Nemone, "but we have given our promise that you shall be freed."

"I would have been honoured by such a position," replied Valthor, the faintest trace of a smile upon his lips, "but I shall have to be content to wait a more propitious event."

"We shall look forward with keen anticipation to that moment," rejoined Nemone graciously. "In the meantime we will arrange an escort to return you to Athne, and hope for better fortune the next time that you fall into our hands. Be ready then early tomorrow to return to your own country."

"I thank your majesty," replied Valthor. "I shall be ready, and when I go I shall carry with me, to cherish through life, the memory of the gracious and beautiful queen of Cathne."

"Our noble Gemnon shall be your host until tomorrow" announced Nemone. "Take him with you now to your quarters, Gemnon, and let it be known that he is Nemone's guest whom none may harm."

Tarzan would have accompanied Gemnon and Valthor, But Nemone detained him. "You will return to my apartments with me," she directed. "I wish to talk with you."

As they walked through the palace, the queen did not Precede her companion as the etiquette of the court Demanded but moved close at his side, looking up into his face as she talked. "I was frightened, Tarzan," she confided. "It is not often that Nemone is frightened by the peril of another, but when I saw you leap into the arena with the lion, my heart stood still. Why did you do it, Tarzan?"

"I was disgusted with what I saw," replied the ape-man shortly.

"Disgusted! What do you mean?"

"The cowardliness of the authority that would permit an unarmed and utterly defenceless man to be forced into an arena with a lion," explained Tarzan candidly.

Nemone flushed. "You know that that authority is I," she said coldly.

"Of course I know it," replied the ape-man, "but that only renders it the more odious."

"What do you mean?" she snapped. "Are you trying to drive me beyond my patience? If you knew me better you would know that that is not safe, not even for you, before whom I have already humbled myself."

"I am not seeking to try your patience," replied the ape-man quietly, "for I am neither interested nor concerned in your powers of self-control. I am merely shocked that one so beautiful may at the same time be so heartless."

The flush faded from the queen's face, the anger from her eyes. She moved on in silence, her mood suddenly introspective, and when they reached the anteroom leading to her private chambers she halted at the threshold of the latter and laid a hand gently upon the arm of the man at her side.

"You are very brave," she said. "Only a very brave man would have leaped into the arena with the lion to save a stranger, but only the bravest of the brave could have dared to speak to Nemone as you have spoken, for the death that the lion deals may be merciful compared with that which Nemone deals when she has been affronted."

"Yet perhaps you knew that I would forgive you. Oh, Tarzan, what magic have you exercised to win such power over me!" She took him by the hand then and led him toward the doorway of her chambers. "You shall teach Nemone how to be human!" As the door swung open there was a new light in the eyes of the queen of Cathne, a softer light than had ever before shone in those beautiful depths. Then it faded, to be replaced by a cold, hard glitter of bitterness and hate. Facing them, in the centre of the apartment, stood M'duze.

She stood there, bent and horrible, wagging her head and tapping the stone floor with her staff. She spoke no word, but fixed them with her baleful glare. As one held in the grip of a power she is unable to resist, Nemone moved slowly towards the ancient hag, leaving Tarzan just beyond the threshold. Slowly and silently the door closed between them. Beyond it the ape-man heard, faintly, the tapping of the staff upon the coloured stones of the mosaic.

Chapter 13

ASSASSIN IN THE NIGHT

A great lion moved silently from the south across the border of Kaffa. If he were following a trail, the heavy rain that had terminated the wet season must have obliterated it long since; yet he moved on with a certain assurance that betokened no sign of doubt.

Why was he there? What urge had drawn him thus, contrary to the habits and customs of his kind, upon this long and arduous journey? Where was he bound? What or whom did he seek? Only he, Numa the lion, king of beasts, knew.

In his quarters in the palace, Erot paced the floor, angry and disconsolate. Sprawled on a bench, his feet wide apart, sat Xerstle deep in thought. The two men were facing a crisis, and they were terrified. Had Erot definitely fallen from the favour of the queen, Xerstle would be dragged down with him; of that there was no doubt.

"But there must be something you can do," insisted Xerstle.

"I have seen both Tomos and M'duze," replied Erot drearily, "and they have promised to help. But Nemone is infatuated with this stranger. None knows Nemone better than does M'duze, and I can tell you, Xerstle, the old hag is frightened. Nemone hates her, and if the attempted thwarting of this new passion arouses her anger sufficiently, it may sweep away the fear that the queen has always held for M'duze, and she will destroy her. It is this that M'duze

fears. And you can imagine how terrified old Tomos is! Without M'duze he would be lost, for Nemone tolerates him only because M'duze demands it."

"But there must be some Way," again insisted Xerstle. "There is no way so long as this fellow, Tarzan, is able to turn Nemone's heart to water," answered Erot. "Why, he does not even kneel to her, and he speaks to her as one might to a naughty slave girl."

"But there is a way!" exclaimed Xerstle in a sudden whisper. "Listen!" Then he launched forth into a detailed explanation of his plan. Erot sat listening to his friend, an expression of rapt interest upon his face. A slave girl crossed the living room where the two men talked, and departed into the corridor beyond, but so engrossed were Erot and Xerstle that neither was aware that she had come or that she had gone.

In their quarters that evening Gemnon and Tarzan partook of the final meal of the day, for neither had enjoyed the prospect of again eating with the other nobles. Valthor slept in the bedroom, having asked not to be disturbed until morning.

"When you have definitely displaced Erot, conditions will be different," explained Gemnon. "Then they will fawn upon you, shower you with attentions, and wait upon your every whim."

"That will never occur," snapped the ape-man.

"Why not?" demanded his companion. "There is nothing that Nemone would not do for you, absolutely nothing.

Why, man, you can rule Cathne if you so choose."

"But I do not choose," replied Tarzan. "Nemone may be mad but I am not. And even were I, I could never be mad enough to accept a position that had once been filled by Erot, the idea disgusts me; let us talk of something pleasant."

"Very well," consented Gemnon with a smile. "Perhaps I think you are foolish, but I admit that I cannot help but admire your courage and decency.

"And now for something more pleasant! Something very much more pleasant! I am going to take you visiting tonight. I am going to take you to see the most beautiful girl in Cathne."

"I thought that there could be no woman in Cathne more beautiful than the queen," objected Tarzan.

"There would not be if Nemone knew of her," replied Gemnon, "but fortunately she does not know. She has never seen this girl, and may Thoos forbid that she ever does!"

"You are much interested," remarked the ape-man, smiling.

"I am in love with her," explained Gemnon simply.

"And Nemone has never seen her? I should think that a difficult condition to maintain, for Cathne is not large, and if the girl be of the same class as you, many other nobles must know of her beauty. One would expect such news to come quickly to the ears of Nemone."

"She is surrounded by very loyal friends, this girl of whom I speak," replied Gemnon. "She is Doria, the daughter of Thudos. Her father is a very powerful noble and head of the faction which wishes to place Alextar on the throne. Only Nemone's knowledge of his great power preserves his life, but owing to the strained relations that exist between Nemone and his house neither he nor members of his family are often at court. Thus it has been easier to prevent knowledge of the great beauty of Doria coming to Nemone."

As the two men were leaving the palace a short time later, they came unexpectedly upon Xerstle, who was most effusive in his greetings. "Congratulations, Tarzan!" he exclaimed, halting the companions. "That was a most noble feat you performed in the lion pit today. All the palace is talking about it, and let me be among the first to tell you how glad I am that you have won the confidence of our gracious and beautiful queen by your bravery, strength, and magnanimity."

Tarzan nodded in acknowledgment of the man's avowal and started to move on, but Xerstle held him with a gesture. "We must see more of one another," he continued. "I am arranging a grand hunt, and I must have you as my guest of honour. There will be but a few of us, a most select party, and I can assure you of good sport. When all the arrangements are completed, I will let you know the day of the hunt. And now good-bye and good luck to you!"

"I care nothing about him or his grand hunt," said Tarzan as he and Gemnon continued on toward the home of Doria.

"Perhaps it would be well to accept," advised Gemnon.

"That fellow and his friends will bear watching, and if you are with them occasionally you can watch them that much better."

Tarzan shrugged. "If I am still here, I shall go with him if you think best."

"If you are still here!" exclaimed Gemnon. "You certainly are not expecting to get away from Cathne, are you?"

"Why, certainly," replied Tarzan. "I may go any day or night. There is nothing to hold me here, and I have given no promise that I would not escape when I wished."

Gemnon smiled a wry smile that Tarzan did not see in the semi-darkness of the ill-lit avenue through which they were passing. "That will make it extremely interesting for me," he remarked.

"Why?" demanded the ape-man.

"Nemone turned you over into my keeping. If you escape while I am responsible for you, she will have me destroyed."

A frown knit the brows of the Lord of the Jungle.

"I did not know that," he said, "but you need not worry. I shall not go until you have been relieved of responsibility." A sudden smile lighted his countenance."

"I think I shall ask Nemone to give me over into the keeping of Erot or Xerstle."

Gemnon chuckled. "What a story that would make!" he cried.

An occasional torch only partially dispelled the gloom beneath the overhanging trees that bordered the avenue that led toward the palace of Thudos. At the intersection of a narrow alleyway, beneath the branches of a wide spreading oak a dark figure lurked in the shadows as Tarzan and Gemnon approached. The keen eyes of the ape-man saw and recognized it as the figure of a man before they came close enough to be in danger, and Tarzan was ready even though he had no suspicion that the man's presence there was in any way concerned with him, for it is the business of the jungle-bred to be always ready, whether danger threatens or not.

Just as the two came opposite the figure, Tarzan heard his name whispered in a hoarse voice. He stopped. "Beware of Erot!" whispered the voice. "Tonight!" Then the figure wheeled and lumbered into the denser shadows of the narrow alleyway, but in the glimpse that Tarzan got of it there was a familiar roll to the great body, just as there had been a suggestion of familiarity in the voice.

"Now who do you suppose that is?" demanded Gemnon. "Come on! We'll capture him and find out," and he started as though to pursue the stranger down the alley.

Tarzan laid a restraining hand upon his shoulder.

"No," he said. "It was someone who has tried to befriend me. If he wishes to conceal his identity, it is not for me to reveal it."

"You are right," assented Gemnon.

"And I think I would have learned no more by pursuing him than I already know. I recognized him by his voice and his gait, and then, as he turned to leave, a movement in the air brought his scent spoor to my nostrils.

I think I would recognize that a mile away, for it is very strong; it always is in powerful men and beasts."

"Why was he afraid of you?" asked Gemnon.

"He was not afraid of me; he was afraid of you because you are a noble."

"He need not have been, if he is a friend of yours. I would not have betrayed him."

"I know that, but he could not. You are a noble, and so you might be a friend of Erot. I do not mind telling you who it was, because I know you would not use the knowledge to harm him. But you will be surprised; I surely was. It was Phobeg."

"No! Why should he befriend the man who defeated and humiliated him, and almost killed him?"

"Because he did not kill him. Phobeg is a simple minded fellow, but he is the type that would not be devoid of gratitude. He is the sort that would bestow doglike devotion upon one who was more powerful than he, for he worships physical prowess."

At the palace of Thudos the two men were ushered into a magnificent apartment by a slave, after the guard at the entrance had recognized Gemnon and permitted them to pass. In the soft light of a dozen cressets they awaited the coming of the daughter of the house to whom the slave carried Gemnon's ring to evidence the identity of her caller.

The light fall of soft sandals upon stone announced the ctmine of their hostess, and both men turned toward the doorway leading into a small open garden from which she was coming. Tarzan saw a girl

of exquisite beauty; but be was more beautiful than Nemone he could not say, there are so many things that enter into the making of a beautiful countenance. Yet he acknowledged to himself that Thudos was wise in keeping her hidden from the queen. She greeted Gemnon with the sweet familiarty of an Old friend, and when Tarzan was present her manner Was cordial and unaffected, yet always the fact that she Was the daughter of Thudos seemed a part of her.

The three spent the evening in pleasant Conversation, and Gemnon and Tarzan were about to leave, when a middle-aged man entered the room. It was Thudos, the father of Doria. He greeted Gemnon cordially and seemed pleased to meet Tarzan, whom he immediately commenced to question relative to the world outside the valleys of Onthar and Thenar.

Thudos was a strikingly handsome man, with strong features, an athletic build, and eyes that were serious and stern that yet had wrinkles at their corners that betokened much laughter. His was a face that one might trust, for integrity, loyalty, and courage had left their imprints plainly upon it, at least for eyes as observant as those of the Lord of the Jungle.

When the two guests rose to leave again, Thudos seemed satisfied with his appraisal of the stranger. "I am glad that Gemnon brought you," he said. "The very fact that he did convinces me that he has confidence in your friendship and loyalty, for, as you may already know, the position of my house at the court of Nemone is such that we receive only assured friends within our walls."

"I understand," replied the ape-man. He made no other reply, but both Thudos and Doria felt that here was a man who might be trusted.

As the two men entered the avenue in front of the palace of their host, a figure slunk into the shadow of a tree a few paces from them, and neither saw it. Then they walked leisurely toward their apartments in the palace.

"Doria said she saw my meeting with Phobeg in the arena," remarked Tarzan. "I have been curious to ask you how she dared come to the stadium when her life is constantly in danger should her beauty become known to the queen?"

"She is always disguised when she goes abroad," replied Gemnon.

"A few touches by an expert hand and hollows appear in her cheeks and beneath her eyes, her brow is wrinkled, and behold! She is no longer the most beautiful woman in the world. Nemone would not give her a second thought if she saw her, but still care is taken to see that Nemone does not see her too closely even then. It is informers we fear the most. Thudos never sells a slave who has seen Doria, and once a new slave enters the palace walls he never leaves them again until long years of service have proved him, and his loyalty is unquestioned. "It is a monotonous life for Doria, the penalty she pays for beauty, but all that we can do is hope and pray that relief will come some day in the death of Nemone or the elevation of Alextar to the throne."

Valthor was asleep on Tarzan's couch when the ape-man entered his bedroom. He had had little rest since his capture, and, in addition, he was suffering from a cliaht wound, so Tarzan moved softly that he might not disturb him and made no light in the room, the darkness of which was partially dispelled by moonlight.

Spreading some skins on the floor against the wall opposite the window, the ape-man lay down and was soon asleep, while in the apartment above him two men crouched in the dark beside the window that was directly above that in Tarzan's bedroom.

For a long time they crouched there in silence. One a large, powerful man, the other smaller and lighter.

Fully an hour passed before either moved other than to Changed a cramped position for one more comfortable; Then smaller man arose. One end of a long rope was Knotted about his body beneath beneath his armpits; in his right He carried a slim dagger-sword.

Cautiously, and silently he went to the window and Looked out, his careful gaze searching the grounds below; Then he sat on the sill and swung his legs through the Window. The larger man, holding the rope firmly with both hands, braced himself. The smaller turned over on his belly and slid out of the window. Hand over hand, the other lowered him; his head dissapeared below the sill.

Very carefully, so as to make no noise, the larger man lowered the smaller until the feet of the latter rested on the sill of Tarzan's bedroom window. Here the man reached in and took hold of the casing; then he jerked twice upon the rope to acquaint his fellow with the fact that he had reached his destination safely and the

other let the rope slip through his fingers loosely as the movements of the man below dragged it slowly out.

The smaller man stepped gingerly to the floor inside the room. Without hesitation he moved toward the bed, his weapon raised and ready in his hand. He made no haste; his one purpose for the present appeared to be the achievement of absolute silence. It was evident that he feared to waken the sleeper. Even when he reached the bed he stood there for a long time searching with his eyes for the right spot to strike that the blow might bring instant death. The assassin knew that Gemnon slept in another bedroom across the living room; what he did not know was that Valthor, the Athnean, lay stretched on the bed beneath his keen weapon.

As the assassin hesitated, Tarzan of the Apes opened his eyes. Though the intruder had made no sound his mere presence in the room had aroused the ape-man; perhaps the effluvium from his body, reaching the sensitive nostrils of the sleeping beast-man, carried the same message to the alert brain that sound would have carried.

At the instant that Tarzan opened his eyes he saw the stranger in the room, saw the dagger raised above the form of the sleeping Valthor, read the whole story in a single glance, and in the same moment arose and leaped upon the unsuspecting murderer, who was dragged back from his victim at the very instant that his weapon was descending.

As the two men crashed to the floor, Valthor awoke and sprang from his cot; but by the time he had discovered what was transpiring, the would-be assassin lay dead upon the floor, and Tarzan of the Apes stood with one foot upon the body of his kill. For an instant the ape-man hesitated, his face upturned as the weird scream of the victorious bull ape trembled on his lips, but then he shook his head, and only a low growl rumbled upward from the deep chest.

Valthor had heard these growls before and was neither surprised nor shocked. The man in the room above had heard only beasts growl, and the sound made him hesitate and wonder. He had heard, too, the crash of the two bodies as Tarzan had hurled the other to the floor, and while he had not interpreted that correctly it had suggested resistance and put him on his guard. Cautiously he stepped closer to the window and looked out, listening.

In the room below, Tarzan of the Apes seized the corpse of the man who had come to kill him and hurled it through the window into the grounds beneath. The man above saw and, turning, slunk from the room and vanished among the dark shadows of the palace corridors.

Chapter 14

THE GRAND HUNT

With the breaking of dawn Tarzan and Valthor arose, for the latter was to set out upon his journey to Athne early. The previous evening a slave had been directed to serve breakfast at daybreak, and the two men now heard him arranging the table in the adjoining room.

"We have met again, and again we part," commented Valthor as he fastened his sandal straps to the ivory guards that encircled his ankles. "I wish that you were going with me to Athne, my friend."

"I would go with you were it not for the fact that Gemnon's life would be forfeited should I leave Cathne while he is responsible for me," replied the ape-man, "but you may rest assured that some day I shall pay you a visit in Athne."

I never expected to see you alive again after we were separated by the flood," continued Valthor, "and when I realized you in the lion pit I could not believe my own eyes. Four times at least have you saved my life, Tarzan. You may be assured of a warm welcome in the house of my father at Athne whenever you come.

The debt, if you feel that there was one, is wiped out," Tarzan assured him, "since you saved my life last night by sleeping in my bed."

"What saved whose life?" demanded a voice at the door.

"Good morning, Gemnon!" greeted Tarzan. "My compliments and congratulations!"

"Thanks! But what about?" demanded the Cathenean.

"Upon your notable ability as a sound sleeper," explained Tarzan, smiling.

Gemnon shook his head dubiously. "Your words are beyond me. What are you talking about?"

"You slept last night through an attempted assassination, the killing of the culprit, and the disposition of his body. Phobeg's warning was no idle gossip."

"You mean that someone came here last night to kill you?"

"And almost killed Valthor instead," and then Tarzan briefly narrated the events of the attempt upon his life.

"Had you ever seen the man before?" asked Gemnon.

"Did you recognize him?"

"I paid little attention to him," admitted Tarzan; "I threw him out of the window. But I do not recall having seen him before."

"Was he a noble?"

"No, he was a common warrior. Perhaps you will recognize him when you see him."

"I shall have to have a look at him and report the matter at once," said Gemnon. "Nemone is going to be furious when she hears this."

"She may have instigated it herself," suggested Tarzan. "She is half-mad."

"Hush!" cautioned Gemnon. "It is death even to whisper that thought. No, I do not believe it was Nemone, but were you to accuse Erot, M'duze, or Tomos I could easily agree to that. I must go now, and if I do not return before you leave, Valthor, be assured that I have enjoyed entertaining you. It is unfortunate that we are enemies and that the next time we meet we shall have to endeavour to take one another's head."

"It is unfortunate and foolish," replied Valthor.

"But it is the custom," Gemnon reminded him.

"Then may we never meet, for I could never take pleasure in killing you."

"Here's to it, then," cried Gemnon, raising his hand as though it held a drinking horn. "May we never meet again!" And with that he turned and left them.

Tarzan and Valthor had but scarcely finished their meal when a noble arrived to tell them that Valthor's escort was ready to depart, and a moment later, with a brief farewell, the Athnean left.

By Nemone's command the ape-man's weapons had been returned to him, and he was engaged in inspecting them, looking to the points and feathers of his arrows, his bowstring, and his grass rope, when Gemnon returned. The Cathnean was quite evidently angry and not a little excited. This was one of the few occasions upon which Tarzan had seen his warder other than smiling and affable.

"I have had a bad half hour with the queen," explained Gemnon. "I was lucky to get away with my life. She is furious over this attempt upon your life and blames me for neglect of duty. What am I to do? Sit on your window sill all night?"

Tarzan laughed. "I am an embarrassment," he said lightly, "and I am sorry. But how can I help it? It was an accident that brought me here; it is perversity that keeps me, the perversity of a spoiled woman."

'You had better not tell her that, or let other than me hear you say it," Gemnon cautioned him.

I may tell her," laughed Tarzan. "I am afraid I never acquired that entirely human accomplishment called diplomacy."

"She has sent me to summon you, and I warn you to exercise a little judgment, even though you have no diplomacy. Shehe is like a raging lion, and whoever arouses her further will be in for a mauling."

"What does she want of me?" demanded Tarzan.

"Am I to remain in this house, caged up like a pet dog, to run at the beck of a woman?"

"She is investigating this attempt on your life and has summoned others to be questioned," Gemnon explained.

Gemnon led the way to a large audience chamber where the nobles of the court were congregated before a massive throne on which the queen sat, her beautiful brows contracted in a frown. As Tarzan and Gemnon entered the room, she looked up; but she did not smile. A noble advanced and led the two men to seats near the foot of the throne.

As Tarzan glanced about at the faces of those near him, he saw

Tomos, and Erot, and Xerstle. Erot was nervous; he fidgeted constantly upon his bench; he played with his fingers and with the hilt of his sword.

"We have been awaiting you," said the queen as Tarzan took his seat. "It appears that you did not exert yourself to hasten in response to our command."

Tarzan looked up at her with an amused smile. "On the contrary, your majesty, I returned at once with the noble Gemnon," he explained respectfully.

"We have summoned you to tell the story of what happened in your apartment last night that resulted in the killing of a warrior." She then turned to a noble standing at her side and whispered a few words in his ear, whereupon the man quit the room. "You may proceed," she said, turning again to Tarzan.

"There is little to tell," replied the ape-man, rising.

"A man came to my room to kill me, but I killed him instead."

"How did he enter your room?" demanded Nemone.

"Where was Gemnon? Did he admit the fellow?"

"Of course not," replied Tarzan. "Gemnon was asleep in his own room. The man who would have killed me was lowered from the window of the apartment above mine and entered through my window. There was a long rope tied about his body."

"How did you know he came to kill you? Did he attack you?"

"Valthor, the Athnean, was sleeping in my bed; I was sleeping on the floor. The man did not see me, for the room was dark. He went to the bed where he thought I was sleeping. I awoke as he stood over Valthor, his sword raised in his hand ready to strike. Then I killed him and threw his body out of the window."

"Did you recognize him? Had you ever seen him before?" asked the queen.

"I did not recognize him."

There was a noise at the entrance to the audience chamber that caused Nemone to glance up. Four slaves bore a stretcher into the room and laid it at the foot of the throne; on it was the corpse of a man.

"Is this the fellow who attempted your life?" demanded Nemone.

"It is," replied Tarzan.

She turned suddenly upon Erot. "Did you ever see this man before?" she demanded.

Erot arose. He was white and trembled a little. "But, your majesty, he is only a common warrior," he countered.

I may have seen him often, yet have forgotten him; that would not be strange, I see so many of them."

"And you," the queen addressed a young noble standing near, "have you ever seen this man before?"

Often," replied the noble. "He was a member of the palace guard and in my company."

"How long has he been attached to the palace?" demanded Nemone. "Not a month, your majesty."

"And before that? Do you know anything about his prior service?"

"He was attached to the retinue of a noble, your replied the young officer hesitantly."

"What noble?" demanded Nemone.

"Erot," replied the witness in a low voice.

The queen looke dlong and searchingly at Erot. "You have a short memory," she said presently, an undisguised sneer in her voice.

Erot was pale and shaken. He looked long at the face of the dead man before he spoke again. "I do recall him now, your majesty, but he does not look the same. Death has changed him; that is why I did not recognize him immediately."

"You are lying," snapped Nemone. "There are some things about this affair that I do not understand. What part you have had in it, I do not know, but I am sure that you had some part, and I am going to find out what.

In the meantime you are banished from the palace. There may be others," she looked meaningly at Tomos, "but I shall find them all out, and when I do it will be the lion pit for the lot!"

Rising, she descended from the throne, and all knelt save Tarzan. As she passed him on her way from the chamber, she paused and looked long and searchingly into his eyes. "Be careful," she whispered; "your life is in danger. I dare not see you for a while, for there is one so desperate that not even I could protect you should

you visit my apartments again. Tell Gemnon to quit the palace and take you to his father's house. You will be safer there, but even then far from safe. In a few days I shall have removed the obstacles that stand between us. Until then, Tarzan, good-bye!"

The ape-man bowed, and the queen of Cathne passed on out of the audience chamber. The nobles rose. They drew away from Erot and clustered about Tarzan. In disgust the ape-man drew away. "Come, Gemnon," he said. "There is nothing to keep us here longer."

Xerstle blocked their way as they were leaving the chamber. "Everything is ready for the grand hunt!" he exclaimed, rubbing his palms together genially. "I thought this tiresome audience would prevent our starting today, but it is still early. The lions and the quarry are awaiting us at the edge of the forest. Get your weapon, and join me in the avenue."

Gemnon hesitated. "Who are hunting with you?" he asked.

"Just you and Tarzan and Pindes," explained Xerstle, "a small and select company that ensures a good hunt."

"We will come," said the ape-man.

As the two returned to their quarters to get their weapons, Gemnon appeared worried. "I am not sure that it is wise to go," he said.

"And why not?" inquired Tarzan.

"This may be another trap for you."

The ape-man shrugged. "It is quite possible, but I cannot remain cooped up in hiding. I should like to see what a grand hunt is; I have heard the term often since I came to Cathne. Who is Pindes? I do not recall him."

"He was an officer of the guard when Erot became the queen's favourite, but through Erot he was dismissed. He is not a bad fellow but weak and easily influenced; however he must hate Erot, and so I think you have nothing to fear from him."

"I have nothing to fear from anyone," Tarzan assured "Perhaps "you think not, but be on guard."

"I am always on guard; had I not been I should have been dead long ago."

"Your self-complacency may be your undoing," growled Gemnon testily.

Tarzan laughed. "I appreciate both danger and my own limitations, but I cannot let fear rob me of my liberty and pleasures of life. Fear is to be more dreaded than death. You are afraid, Erot is afraid, Nemone is afraid; and are all unhappy. Were I afraid, I should be unhappy but no safer. I prefer to be simply cautious.

And by the way, way, speaking of caution, Nemone instructed Me to tell you to take me from the palace and keep me in your father's house. She says the palace is no safe place for me. I really think that it is M'duze who is after me."

"M'duze and Erot and Tomos," said Gemnnon; "there is a triumvirate of greed and malice and duplicity that I should hate to have upon my trail."

At his quarters, Gemnon gave orders that his and Tarzan's belongings be moved to the house of his father while the two men were hunting; then they went to the avenue where they found Xerstle and Pindes awaiting them. The latter was a man of about thirty, rather good looking but with a weak face and eyes that invariably dropped from a direct gaze. He met Tarzan with great cordiality, and as the four men walked along the main avenue of the city toward the eastern gate he was most affable.

Beyond the eastern gate an open parklike plain stretched for a short distance to the forest. Near the gate four stalwart slaves held two lions in leash, while a fifth man, naked but for a dirty loin-cloth, squatted upon the ground a short distance away.

As the four hunters approached the party, Xerstle explained to Tarzan that the leashed beasts were his hunting lions, and as the ape-man's observant eyes ran over the five men who were to accompany them on the hunt he recognized the stalwart black seated upon the ground apart as the man he had seen upon the auction block in the market-place. Xerstle approached the fellow and spoke briefly with him, evidently giving him orders.

When Xerstle had finished, the black started off at a trot across the plain in the direction of the forest. Everyone watched his progress.

"Why is he running ahead?" asked Tarzan. "He will frighten away the quarry."

Pindes laughed. "He is the quarry."

"You mean "demanded Tarzan with a scowl.

"That this is a grand hunt," cried Xerstle, "where we hunt man, the grandest quarry."

"What happens if you do not get him? Is he free then?"

"I should say not; not if we can capture him again cried Xerstle. "Slaves cost too much money to be lightly thrown away like that."

When the native reached the forest, Xerstle spoke a word of command to the keepers and they unleashed the two great beasts. The lions bounded away in pursuit of the quarry.

Halfway to the forest the lions settled down to a slower gait, and the hunters commenced gradually to overhaul them. Xerstle and Pindes appeared excited, far more excited than the circumstances of the hunt warranted; Gemnon was silent and thoughtful; Tarzan was disgusted and bored. But before they reached the forest his interest was aroused, for a plan had occurred to him whereby he might derive some pleasure from the day's sport.

The wood, which the hunters presently entered a short distance behind the lions, was of extraordinary beauty. The trees were very old and gave evidence of having received the intelligent care of man, as did the floor of the forest. There was little or no deadwood in the trees, and only occasional clumps of underbrush upon the ground between them. As far as Tarzan could see among the boles of the trees, the aspect was that of a well-kept park rather than of a natural wood, and in answer to a comment he made upon this fact Gemnon explained that for ages his people had given regular attention to the conservation of this forest from the city of gold to the Pass of the Warriors.

Once within the forest, Tarzan dropped gradually to the near of the party, and then, when none was looking, swung the branches of a tree. Plain to his nostrils had been the scent spoor of the quarry from the beginning of the chase and now the ape-man knew, possibly even better than the lions, the direction of the hopeless flight of the man.

Swinging through the trees in a slight detour that Carried him around and beyond the hunters without revealing his desertion to them, Tarzan sped through the middle terraces of the forest as only the Lord of the Jungle can. Stronger and stronger in his nostrils waxed the scent of the quarry; behind him came the lions and the hunters.

And he knew that he must act quickly, for they were no great distance in his rear. A grim smile lighted his grey eyes as he considered the denouement of the project he had undertaken.

Presently he saw the native running through the forest just ahead of him. The fellow was moving at a dogged trot, casting an occasional glance behind him.

Tarzan was directly above the man now, and he spoke to him in the language of his people. "Take to the trees," he called down.

The native looked up, but he did not stop. "Who are you?" he demanded.

"An enemy of your master, who would help you escape," replied the ape-man.

"There is no escape; if I take to the trees they will stone me down."

"They will not find you; I will see to that."

"Why should you help me?" demanded the man, but he stopped now and looked up again, searching for the man whose voice came down to him in a tongue that gave him confidence in the speaker.

"I have told you that I am an enemy of your master."

Now the native saw the bronzed figure of the giant above him. "You are a white man!" he exclaimed. "You are trying to trick me. Why should a white man help me?" "Hurry!" admonished Tarzan, "or it will be too late, and no one can help you.

For just an instant longer the native hesitated; then be leaped for a low-hanging branch and swung himself up into the tree as Tarzan came down to meet him.

Chapter 15

THE PLOT THAT FAILED

Swiftly, the giant of the jungle bore the Galia slave toward the east where, beyond the forest, loomed the mountains that hemmed Onthar upon that side. For a mile he carried him through the trees and then swung lightly to the zround.

"If the lions ever pick up your trail now," he said, it will not be until long after you have reached the mountains and safety. But do not delay-go now.

The man fell upon his knees and took the hand of his savour in his own. "I am Hafim," he said. "If I could serve you, I would die for you. Who are you?"

"I am Tarzan of the Apes. Now go your way and lose no time."

One more favour," begged the native.

"What?"

"I have a brother. He, too, was captured by these when they captured me. He is a slave in the gold mines south of Cathne. His name is Niaka. If you should to the gold mines, tell him that Hafim has escaped."

"I shall tell him. Now go."

Silently the native disappeared among the boles of the Forest trees, and Tarzan sprang again into the branches and Swung rapidly back in the direction of the hunters. When he reached them, dropping to the ground and approaching them from behind, they

were clustered near the spot at which Hafim had taken to the trees.

"Where have you been?" asked Xerstle. "We thought that you had become lost."

"I dropped behind," replied the ape-man. "Where is your quarry? I thought that you would have had him by this time."

"We cannot understand it," admitted Xerstle. "It is evident that he climbed this tree, because the lions followed him to this very spot, where they stood looking up into the tree; but they did not growl as though they saw the man. Then we leashed them again and sent one of the keepers into the tree, but he saw no sign of the quarry.

"It is a mystery!" exclaimed Pindes.

"It is indeed," agreed Tarzan; "at least for those who do not know the secret."

"Who does know the secret?" demanded Xerstle.

"The black slave who has escaped you must know, if no other."

"He has not escaped me," snapped Xerstle. "He has but prolonged the hunt and increased its interest. Come, let us go. I shall hunt with Gemnon and Pindes with Tarzan. We shall take one lion, they the other."

"Agreed," said Tarzan.

"But I am responsible to the queen for the safe return of Tarzan," demurred Gemnon. "I do not like to have him out of my sight even for a short time."

"I promise that I shall not try to escape," the ape-man assured him.

"It was not that alone of which I was thinking," explained Gemnon.

"And I can assure you that I can take care of myself, if you feel fears for my safety," added Tarzan.

Reluctantly Gemnon assented to the arrangement, and presently the two parties separated, Xerstle and Gemnon going towards the northwest while Pindes and Tarzan took an easterly direction. The latter had proceeded but a short distance, the lion still upon its leash, when Pindes suggested that they separate, spreading out through the forest, and thus combing it more carefully.

"You go straight east," he said to Tarzan, "the keepers and the lion

will go northeast, and I will go north. If any comes upon the trail he may shout to attract the others to his position. If we have not located the quarry in an hour let us all converge toward the mountains at the eastern side of the forest."

The ape-man nodded and started off in the direction assigned him, soon disappearing among the trees. But neither Pindes nor the keepers moved from where he had left them, the keepers held by a whispered word from Pindes. The leashed lion looked after the departing ape-man, and Pindes smiled. The keepers looked at him questioningly.

"Such sad accidents have happened many times before," said Pindes.

Tarzan moved steadily toward the east. Presently he heard a noise behind him and glancing back was not surprised by what he saw. A lion was stalking him, a lion wearing the harness of a hunting lion of Cathne. It was one of Xerstle's lions; it was the same lion that had accompanied Pindes and Tarzan.

Instantly the ape-man guessed the truth, and a grim light glinted in his eyes. It was no light of anger, but there was disgust in it and the shadowy suggestion of a savage smile. The lion, realizing that its quarry had discovered it, began to roar. In the distance Pindes heard and smiled.

Let us go now," he said to the keepers. "We must not find the remains too quickly; that might not look well."

The three men moved slowly off toward the north.

From a distance Gemnon and Xerstle heard the roar of The hunting lion. "They have picked up the trail." said Gemnon, halting; "we had best join them."

"Not yet," demurred Xerstle. "It may be a false trail. We will wait until we hear the hunters call. But Gemnon was troubled.

Tarzan stood awaiting the coming of the lion. He could have taken to the trees and escaped, but a spirit of bravado prompted him to remain. He hated treachery, and exposing it gave him pleasure. He carried a Cathnean spear and his own hunting knife; his bow and arrows he had left behind.

The lion came nearer; it seemed vaguely disturbed. Perhaps it did not understand why the quarry stood and faced it instead of

running away. Its tail twitched; its head was flattened; slowly it came on again, its wicked eyes gleaming angrily.

Tarzan waited. In his right hand was the sturdy Cathnean spear, in his left his hunting knife. He measured the distance with a trained eye as the lion started its swift, level charge; then, when it was coming at full speed, his spear hand flew back and he launched the heavy weapon.

Deep beneath the left shoulder it drove, deep into the savage heart, but it checked the beast's charge for but an instant. Infuriated now, the carnivore rose upon its hind legs above the ape-man, its great, taloned paws reaching to drag him to the slavering jowls; but Tarzan, swift as Ara the lightning, stooped and sprang beneath them, sprang to one side and then in again, closing with the lion, leaping upon its back.

With a hideous roar, the animal wheeled and sought to bury its great fangs in the bronzed body or reach it with those raking talons. It threw itself to right and left as the creature clinging to it drove a steel blade repeatedly into the already torn and bleeding heart.

The vitality and life tenacity of a lion are astounding, but even that mighty frame could not long withstand the lethal wounds its adversary had inflicted, and presently it slumped to earth and, with a little quiver, died.

Then the ape-man leaped to his feet. With one foot upon the carcass of his kill, Tarzan of the Apes raised his face to the leafy canopy of the Cathnean forest and from his great chest rolled the hideous victory cry of the bull ape which has killed.

As the uncanny challenge reverberated down the forest aisles, Pindes and the two keepers looked questioningly at one another and laid their hands upon their sword hilts.

"In the name of Thoos! What was that?" demanded one of the keepers.

"Silence!" admonished Pindes. "Do you want the thing to creep upon us unheard because of your jabbering!"

"What was it, master?" asked one of the men in a whisper.

"It may have been the death cry of the stranger," suggested Pindes, voicing the hope that was in his heart.

"It sounded not like a death cry, master," replied the keeper.

"There was a note of strength and elation in it, and none of weakness and defeat."

At a little distance, Gemnon and Xerstle heard, too. "What was that?" demanded the latter.

Gemnon shook his head. "I do not know, but we had better go and find out. I did not like the sound of it."

Xerstle appeared nervous. "It was nothing, perhaps, but the wind in the trees. Let us go on with our hunting." "There is no wind," demurred Gemnon. "I am going to investigate. I am responsible for the safety of the stranger; but, of even more importance than that, I like him."

"Oh, so do I!" exclaimed Xerstle eagerly. "But nothing could have happened to him. Pindes is with him."

"That is precisely what I was thinking," observed Gemnon.

"That nothing could have happened to him?"

"That Pindes is with him!"

Xerstle shot a quick, suspicious look at the other, motioned to the keepers to follow with the leashed lion, and fell in behind Gemnon, who had already started back toward the point at which they had separated from their companions.

In the meantime Pindes, unable to curb his curiosity, overcame his fears and started after Tarzan.

They had not gone far when Pindes, who was in the lead, halted suddenly and pointed straight ahead. "What is that?" he demanded.

The keepers pressed forward. "Mane of Thoos!" cried one. "It is the lion!"

They advanced slowly, watching the lion, looking to nght and left. "It is dead!" exclaimed Pindes.

The three men examined the body of the dead beast, turning it over. "It has been stabbed to death," announced one of the keepers.

"The Galla slave had no weapon," said Pindes thoughtfully.

"The stranger carried a knife," a keeper reminded him.

"Whoever killed the lion must have fought it hand to hand," reflected Pindes aloud.

"Then he must be lying nearby dead or wounded, master."

"He could have killed Phobeg with his bare hands that day that he threw him into the audience at the stadium," a keeper reminded the noble. "He carried him around as though Phobeg were a babe. He is very strong."

"What has that to do with the matter?" demanded Pindes irritably.

"I do not know, master. I was only thinking."

I did not tell you to think," snapped Pindes; "I told You to hunt for the man that killed the lion. He must be dying or dead nearby."

While they hunted, Xerstle and Gemnon were drawing Nearer. The latter was much concerned about the welfare of his charge. He trusted neither Xerstle nor Pindes, and now he commenced to suspect that he and Tarzan had been deliberately separated sinister purposes. He was walking a little behind Xerstle at the time: the keepers, with the lion lion, were just ahead of them. He felt a hand upon his shoulder and wheeled about. There stood Tarzan, a smile upon his lips. "Where did you drop from?" demanded Gemnon.

"We separated to search for the Galla. Pindes and I," explained the ape-man as Xerstle turned at the sound of Gemnon' s voice and discovered him.

"Did you hear that terrible scream a while ago?" demanded Xerstle. "We thought it possible that one of you was hurt, and we were hurrying to investigate."

"Did someone scream?" inquired Tarzan innocently.

"Perhaps it was Pindes, for I am not hurt."

Shortly after Tarzan had rejoined them, Xerstle and Gemnon came upon Pindes and his two lion keepers searching the underbrush and the surrounding forest.

As his eyes fell upon Tarzan, Pindes's eyes went wide in astonishment, and he paled a little.

"What has happened?" demanded Xerstle. "What are you looking for? Where is your lion?"

"He is dead," explained Pindes. "Someone or something stabbed him to death." He did not look at Tarzan; he feared to do so. "We have been looking for the man who did it, thinking that he must have been badly mauled and, doubtless, killed."

"Have you found him?" asked Tarzan.

"No".

"Shall I help you search for him? Suppose you and I, Pindes, go away alone and look for him!"

For a moment Pindes seemed choking as he sought for a reply. "No!" he exclaimed presently. "It would be useless; we have searched carefully. There is not even a sign of blood to indicate that he was wounded."

"And you found no trace of the quarry?" asked Xerstle.

"None," replied Pindes. "He has escaped, and we might as well return to the city. I have had enough hunting for today."

Xerstle only grunted and strode on moodily toward the city. When the party separated before the house of Gemnon's father, Tarzan stood close to Xerstle and whispered in a low voice, "My compliments to Erot, and may he have better luck next time!"

Chapter 16

IN THE TEMPLE OF THOOS

As Tarzan sat with Gemnon and the latter's father and mother at dinner that evening, a slave entered the room to announce that a messenger had come from the house of Thudos, the father of Doria, with an important communication for Gemnon.

"Fetch him here," directed the young noble, and a moment later a tall slave was ushered into the apartment.

"Ah, Gemba!" exclaimed Gemnon in a kindly tone.

"You have a message for me?"

"Yes, master," replied the slave, "but it is important—and secret."

"You may speak before these others, Gemba," replied Gemnon. "What is it?"

"Doria, the daughter of Thudos, my master, has sent me to tell you that by a ruse the noble Erot gained entrance to her father's house and spoke with her today. What he said to her was of no importance; only the fact that he saw her is important."

"The jackal!" exclaimed Gemnon's father.

Gemnon paled. "That is all?" he inquired.

"That is all, master," replied Gemba.

Gemnon took a gold coin from his pocket pouch and handed it to the slave. "Return to your mistress, and tell her that I shall come and speak with her lather tomorrow. After the slave had withdrawn, Gemnon looked hopelessly at his father. "What can I

do?" he asked. "What can Thudos do? What can anyone do? We are helpless."

"Perhaps I can do something," suggested Tarzan. "For the moment I seem to hold the confidence of your queen. When I see her I shall question her, and if it is necessary I shall intercede in your behalf."

A new hope sprang to Gemnon's eyes. "If you will!" he cried. "She will listen to you. I believe that you alone might save Doria. But remember that the queen must not see her."

Early the next morning a messenger from the palace brought a command to Tarzan to visit the queen at noon, with instructions to Gemnon to accompany Tarzan with a strong guard as she feared treachery on the part of Tarzan's enemies.

"They must be powerful enemies that dare attempt to thwart the wishes of Nemone," commented Gemnon's father.

"There is only one in all Cathne who dares do that," replied Gemnon, "and that is M'duze.

"Come," he continued, "we have the morning to ourselves. What shall we do in the meantime?"

"I should like to visit the mines of Cathne," replied Tarzan; "shall we have time?"

"Yes, we shall," replied Gemnon. "The Mine of the Rising Sun is not far, and as there is little to see after you get there, the trip will not take long."

On the road from Cathne to the mine, Gemnon pointed out the place where the war and hunting lions of Cathne were bred; but they did not stop to visit the place, and presently they were winding up the short mountain road to the Gold Mine of the Rising Sun.

As Gemnon had warned him, there was little of interest for Tarzan to see. The workings were open, the mother lode lying practically upon the surface of the ground. So rich was it that only a few slaves working with crude picks and bars were needed to supply the coffers of Cathne with vast quantities of the precious metal. But it was not the mines nor gold that had caused Tarzan to wish to visit the diggings. He had promised Hafim that he would carry a message to his brother Niaka, and it was for this purpose that he had suggested the visit.

As he moved about among the slaves, ostensibly inspecting the

lode, he finally succeeded in separating himself sufficiently from Gemnon and the warriors who guarded the workers to permit him to speak unnoticed to one of the slaves.

"Which is Niaka?" he asked in Galla, lowering his voice to a whisper.

The man looked up in surprise, but at a warning gesture from Tarzan bent his head again and answered in a whisper, "Niaka is the big man at my right. He is headman; you see that he does not work."

Tarzan moved then in the direction of Niaka, and, when he was close, stopped beside him and leaned as though inspecting the lode that was uncovered at his feet.

"Listen," he whispered. "I bring you a message, but let no one know that I am talking to you. it is from your brother Hafim. He has escaped."

"How?" whispered Niaka.

Briefly, Tarzan explained.

"It was you, then, who saved him?"

The ape-man nodded.

"I am only a poor slave," said Niaka, "and you are a powerful noble, no doubt, so I can never repay you. But should you ever need any service that Niaka can render, you have but to command; with my life I would serve you. In that hut I live with my woman; because I am headman I am trusted and thus live alone. If you ever want me you will find me there." "I ask no return for what I did," replied Tarzan. "but I shall remember where you live; one never knows what the future holds." He moved away then and joined Gemnon, and presently the two turnmed back toward the city, while in the palace of the queen, Tomos entered the apartment of Nemone and knelt.

"What now?" she demanded. "Is the affair so urgent that I must be interrupted at my toilet?"

"It is, majesty," replied the councillor, "and I beg that you send your slaves away. What I have to say is for your ears alone."

Nemone dismissed the girls. Then she turned to the councillor, who had arisen. "Well, what is it?"

"Your majesty has long had reason to suspect the loyalty of

Thudos," Tomos reminded her, "and in the interest of your majesty's welfare and the safety of the throne, I am constantly watchful of the activities of this powerful enemy. Spurred on by love and loyalty, the noble Erot has been my most faithful agent and ally, and it is really to him that we owe the information that I bring you.

Nemone tapped her sandalled foot impatiently upon the mosaic floor. "Have done with the self-serving preamble, and tell me what you have to tell me," she snapped.

"Briefly, then, it is this: Gemnon conspires also with Thudos, hoping, doubless, that his reward will be the beautiful daughter of his chief."

"That hollow-cheeked strumpet!" exclaimed Nemone. "Who said she was beautiful?"

"Erot tells me that Gemnon and Thudos believe her the most beautiful woman in the world," replied Tomos.

"There are others who think so, too," he added.

"What others?"

"I but hesitated to name the other for fear of wounding your majesty," said Tomos oilily, "but if you insist, it is the stranger called Tarzan."

Nemone sat up very straight. "What fabric of lies is this you and M'duze are weaving?" she demanded.

"It is no lie, majesty. Tarzan and Gemnon were seen coming from the house of Thudos late at night. Erot had followed them there. He saw them go in, and they were there long while. Hiding in the shadows across the avenue, he saw them come out. He says that they were quarrelling over Doria, and he believes that it was Gemnon who sought the life of Tarzan because of jealousy."

Nemone sat straight and stiff upon her couch; her face was pale and tense with fury. "Someone shall die for this," she said in a low voice. "Go!"

Tomos backed from the room. He was elated until he had time to reflect more fully upon her words; then he reflected that Nemone had not stated explicitly who should die.

It was almost noon when Tarzan and Gemnon returned to the city, and time for the latter to conduct Tarzan to his audience with Nemone. With a guard of warriors they went to the palace, where

the ape-man was immediately admitted alone into the presence of the queen.

"Where have you been?" she demanded.

Tarzan looked at her in surprise; then he smiled. "I visited the Mine of the Rising Sun."

"Where were you last night?"

"At the house of Gemnon," he replied.

"You were with Doria!" accused Nemone.

"No," said the ape-man; "that was the night before."

He had been surprised by the accusation and the knowledge that it connoted, but he did not let her see that he was surprised. He was not thinking of himself but of Doria and Gemnon, seeking a plan whereby he might protect them. It was evident that some enemy had turned informer and that Nemone already knew of the visit to the house of Thudos. Therefore, he felt that it would but have aroused the queen's suspicions to have denied it; to admit it freely, to show that he sought to conceal nothing, would allay them. As a matter of fact Tarzan's frank and ready reply left Nemone rather flat.

"Why did you go to the house of Thudos" she asked, but this time her tone was not accusing.

"You see, Gemnon does not dare to leave me alone for fear that I shall escape or that something may befall me, and so he is forced to take me wherever he goes. It is rather hard on him, Nemone, and I have been intending to ask you to make someone else responsible for me for at least a part of the time."

"We will speak of that later," replied the queen. "Why does Gemnon go to the house of Thudos?" Nemone's eyes narrowed suspiciously.

The ape-man smiled. "What a foolish question for a woman to ask!" he exclaimed. "Gemnon is in love with Doria. I thought all Cathne knew that; he certainly takes enough pains to tell all his acquaintances."

"You are sure that it is not you who are in love with her?" demanded Nemone.

Tarzan looked at her with disgust he made no effort to conceal. "Do not be a fool, Nemone," he said. "I do not like fool women."

The jaw of the queen of Cathne dropped. In all her life no one had ever addressed her in words or tones like these.

When she spoke again, she had regained her calm. "I was told that you loved her," she explained, "but I did not believe it. Is she very beautiful? I have heard that she is considered the most beautiful woman in Cathne."

"Perhaps Gemnon thinks so," replied Tarzan with a laugh, "but you know what love does to the eyes of youth."

"What do you think of her?" demanded the queen.

The ape-man shrugged. "She is not bad looking," he said.

"Is she as beautiful as Nemone?" demanded the queen.

"As the brilliance of a far star is to the brilliance of the sun."

The reply appeared to please Nemone. She arose and came closer to Tarzan. There was a rattling of chains at the far end of the room, followed by a terrific roar as Belthar sprang to his feet. Nemone shrank suddenly away from the ape-man, a shudder ran through her body, and an expression, half fright, half anger, suffused her face.

"It is always something," she said irritably, trembling a little. "Belthar is jealous. There is a strange bond linking the life of that beast to my life. I do not know what it is; I wish I did." A light, almost of madness, glittered in her eyes. "But this I know: when Belthar dies, I die!"

She looked up rather sadly at Tarzan as again her mood changed. "Come, my friend," she said. "We shall go to the temple together and perhaps Thoos may answer the questions that are in the heart of Nemone." She struck a bronze disc that depended from the ceiling, and as the brazen notes reverberated in the room, a door opened and a noble bowed low upon the threshold.

"The guard!" commanded the queen. "We are visiting Thoos in his temple."

The progress to the temple was in the nature of a pageant-marching warriors with pennons streaming from spear tips, nobles resplendent in gorgeous trappings, the queen in a golden chariot drawn by lions. Tomos walked upon one side of the glittering car, Tarzan upon the other where Erot had previously walked.

The ape-man was as uneasy as a forest lion as he strode between the lines of gaping citizenry. Crowds annoyed and irritated him;

formalities irked him. His thoughts were far away in the distant jungle that he loved. He knew that Gemnon was nearby watching him, but whether he was nearby or not, Tarzan would not attempt to escape this friend was responsible for him. His mind occupied with such thoughts, he spoke to the queen.

"At the palace," he reminded her, "I spoke to you concerning the matter of relieving Gemnon of the irksome job of watching me."

"Gemnon has acquitted himself well," she replied. "I see no reason for changing."

"Relieve him then, occasionally," suggested Tarzan. "Let Erot take his place."

Nemone looked at him in astonishment. "But Erot hates you!" she exclaimed.

"All the more reason that he would watch me carefully," argued Tarzan.

"He would probably kill you."

"He would not dare if he knew that he must pay for my death or escape with his own life," suggested Tarzan.

"You like Gemnon, do you not?" inquired Nemone innocently.

"Very much," the ape-man assured her.

"Then he is the man to watch you, for you would not imperil his life by escaping while he is responsible." Tarzan smiled inwardly and said no more. It was evident that Nemone was no fool. He would have to devise some other plan of escape that would not jeopardize the safety of his friend.

At the entrance to the temple Phobeg was on guard as a girl entered to worship. Recognizing the warrior, she greeted him and paused for a moment's conversation, the royal party having not yet entered the temple square.

"I have not seen you to talk with for a long time, Phobeg," she said. "I am glad that you are back again on the temple guard."

'Thanks to the stranger called Tarzan I am alive and here," replied Phobeg.

"I should think that you would hate him!" exclaimed the girl.

"Not I," cried Phobeg. "I know a better man when I see one. I admire him. And did he not grant me my life when the crowd

screamed for my death?"

"That is true," admitted the girl. "And now he needs a friend."

"What do you mean, Mamma?" demanded the warrior.

"I was in the adjoining room when Tomos visited the queen this morning," explained the girl, "and I overheard him tell her that Thudos and Gemnon and Tarzan were conspiring against her and that Tarzan loved Doria, the daughter of Thudos."

"How did Tomos know these things?" asked Phobeg.

"Did he offer proof?"

"He said that Erot had watched and had seen Gemnon and Tarzan visit the house of Thudos," explained Maluma. "He also told her that Erot had seen Doria and had reported that she was very beautiful."

Phobeg whistled. "That will be the end of the daughter of Thudos," he said.

"It will be the end of the stranger, too," prophesied Maluma, "and I am sorry, for I like him. He is not like the jackal Erot, whom everyone hates."

"Here comes the queen!" exclaimed Phobeg as the procession entered the temple square.

Before the temple, Nemone alighted from her chariot and walked up the broad stairway to the ornate entrance. Behind her were the priests. Following them came the nobles of the court, the warriors of the guard remaining in the temple square before the entrance.

The temple was a large three-storied building with a great central dome, about the interior of which ran galleries at the seco nd and third stories. The interior of the dome was of gold as were the pillars that supported the galleries, while the walls of the building were embellished with colourful mosaics. Directly opposite the main entrance, on a level with a raised dais, a great cage was built into a niche, and on either side of the cage was an altar supporting a lion carved from solid gold. Before the dais was a stone railing inside of which was a throne and a row of stone benches facing the cage in the niche.

Nemone advanced and seated herself upon the throne while the nobles took their places upon the benches. Nc one paid any attention to Tarzan, so he remained outside the railing, a mildly interested spectator.

The high priest began a meaningless singsong chant, in which the others joined occasionally as though making responses. Nemone leaned forward eagerly; her eyes were fastened upon the old lion.

Suddenly the chanting ceased and the queen arose.

"O Thoos!" she cried, her hands outstretched toward the mangy old carnivore. "Nemone brings you greetings. Receive them from Nemone and bless her. Give her life and health and happiness; most of all Nemone prays for happiness. Preserve her friends and destroy her enemies. And, O Thoos, give her the one thing that she most desires-love, the love of the one man in all the world that Nemone has ever loved!" And the lion glared at her through the bars.

She spoke as though in a tiance, as though oblivious to all else around her save the god to which she prayed.

Nemone sat, silent and rigid, upon her throne, staring straight ahead at the lion in the cage. The priests and many of the nobles were reciting prayers in monotones. It was evident to Tarzan that they were praying to the lion, for every eye was upon the repulsive beast. Some of the questions that had puzzled him when he had first come to Cathne were answered. He understood now the strange oaths of Phobeg and his statement that he had stepped upon the tail of Thoos.

Tarzan turned away in disgust and anger and walked from the temple out into the fresh air and the sunlight, and as he did so a warrior at the entrance hailed him by name in a whisper. There was a cautionary warning in the voice that prompted the ape-man to give no apparent sign of having heard as he turned his eyes casually in the direction from which the words had come, nor did he betray any interest when he discovered that it was Phobeg addressed him.

Turning slowly, so that his back was toward the warrior, Tarzen looked back into the temple as though expecting the retuirn of the royal party. Then he backed to the side of the entrance as one might who waits and stood so close to Phobeg that the latter might have touched him by moving his spear hand a couple of inches; but neither gave any sign of being aware of the identity or presence of the other.

In a low whisper, through lips that scarcely moved, Phobeg spoke. "I must speak to you! Come to the rear of the temple two hours after the sun has set. Do not answer, but if you hear and will

come, turn your head to the right."

As Tarzan gave the assenting signal, the royal party commenced to file from the temple, and he fell in behind Nemone. The queen was quiet and moody, as she always was after the temple had aroused her to religious frenzy; the reaction left her weak and indifferent. At the palace, she dismissed her following, including Tarzan, and withdrew to the seclusion of her apartments.

Chapter 17

THE SECRET OF THE TEMPLE

After the royal party left the temple, Maluma came out and paused again to gossip with Phobeg. For some time they talked before she bid him good-bye and started back toward the palace. They spoke of many things-of the man in the secret prison behind a heavy golden door beneath the temple floor, of Erot and Tomos, of Nemone and Tarzan, of Gemnon and Doria, and of themselves. Being human, they talked mostly of themselves. It was late when Maluma returned to the palace. It was already the evening meal hour.

In the home of his father, Gemnon paced the floor of the patio as he awaited the summons to the evening meal.

Seeking to divert Gemnon's mind from his troubles, Tarzan spoke of the ceremony at the temple, but principally of the temple itself, praising its beauty, commenting upon its magnificence.

"The temple does hide a real wrong," Gemnon said.

"Somewhere within it is hidden Alextar, the brother of Nemone, and while he rots there the corrupt Tomos and the cruel M'duze rule Cathne through the mad Nemone. "There are many who would have a change and place Alextar on the throne, but they fear the wrath of the terrible triumvirate. So we go on, and nothing is done. Victim after victim succumbs to the jealousy and fear that constantly animate the throne.

"We have little hope today; we shall have no hope if the queen

carries out the plan she is believed to be contemplating and destroys Alextar. There are reasons why it would be to her advantage to do so, the most important being the right of Alextar to proclaim himself king should he ever succeed in reaching the palace.

"If Nemone should die, Alextar would become king, and the populace would insist that he take his rightful place. For this reason Tomos and M'duze are anxious to destroy him. It is to Nemone's credit that she has withstood their arguments for all these years, steadfastly refusing to destroy Alextar. But if ever he seriously threatens her powers, he is lost. Rumours that have reached her ears that a plot has been perfected to place him on the throne may already have sealed his doom."

During the meal that evening, Tarzan considered plans for visiting Phobeg at the temple. He wished to go alone but knew that he would place Gemnon in an embarrassing position should he suggest such a plan, while to permit the noble to accompany him might not only seal Phobeg's lips but jeopardize his safety as well. Therefore, he decided to go secretly.

Following the stratagem he had adopted, he remained in conversation with Gemnon and his parents until almost two hours after the sun had set; then he excused himself, saying that he was tired, and went to the room that had been assigned him. But he did not tarry there. Instead, he merely crossed the room from the door to the window and stepped out into the patio upon which it faced. Here, as throughout the gardens and avenues of the section of the city occupied by the nobility, grew large, old trees, and a moment later the Lord of the Jungle was winging through his native element toward the golden temple of Thoos.

He stopped at last in a tree near the rear of the temple where he saw the huge and familiar figure of Phobez waiting in the shadows below. Soundlessly, the ape-man dropped to the ground in front of the astonished warrior "By the great fangs of Thoos!" ejaculated Phobeg "but you gave me a start."

"You expected me," was Tarzan's only comment.

"But not from the skies," retorted Phobeg. "However, you are here and it is well; I have much more to tell you than when I asked you to come. I have learned more since.

"I am listening," said Tarzan.

"A girl in the service of the queen overheard a conversation between Nemone and Tomos," commenced Phobeg. "Tomos accused you and Gemnon and Thudos of conspiring against her. Erot spied upon you and knew of your long visit at the home of Thudos a few nights since. He also managed to enter the house on some pretext the following night and saw Doria, the daughter of Thudos. Tomos told Nemone that Doria was very beautiful and that you were in love with her.

"Nemone is not yet convinced that you love Doria, but to be on the safe side she has ordered Tomos to have the girl abducted and brought to the temple where she will be imprisoned until Nemone decides upon her fate. She may destroy her, or she may be content to have her beauty disfigured.

"But what you must know is this: if you give Nemone the slightest reason to believe that you are conspiring against her or that you are fond of Doria, she will have you killed. All that I can do is warn you.

"You warned me once before, did you not," asked Tarzan, "the night that Gemnon and I went to the house of Thudos?"

"Yes, that was I," replied Phobeg.

"Why have you done these things?" asked the ape-man.

"Because I owe my life to you," replied the warrior, "and because I know a man when I see one. If a man can pick Phobeg up and toss him around as though he were a baby, Phobeg is willing to be his slave."

"I can only thank you for what you have told me, Phobeg," said Tarzan. "Now tell me more. If Doria is brought to the temple, where will she be imprisoned?"

"That is hard to say. Alextar is kept in rooms beneath the floor of the temple, but there are rooms upon the second and third floors where a prisoner might be safely confined, especially a woman."

"Could you get word to me if she is arrested?"

"I could try," replied Phobeg.

"Good! Is there anything further?"

"No."

"Then I shall return to Gemnon and warn him. Perhaps we shall find a way to pacify Nenome or outwit her."

"Either would be difficult," commented Phobeg, "but good-bye and good luck!"

Tarzan swung into the tree above the warrior's head and disappeared among the shadows of the night, while Phobeg shook his head in wonderment and returned to his quarters in the temple.

The ape-man made his way to his room by the same avenue he had left it and went immediately to the common living room where the family ordinarily congregated for the evenings. Here he found Gemnon's father and mother, but Gemnon was not there.

"You could not sleep?" inquired the mother.

"No," replied the ape-man. "Where is Gemnon?"

"He was summoned to the palace a short time alter you went to your room," explained Gemnon's father.

Announcing that he would wait up until the son returned, Tarzan remained in the living room in conversation with the parents. He wondered a little that Gemnon should have been summoned to the palace at such an hour, and the things that Phobeg had told him made him a little apprehensive, but he kept his own council rather than frighten his host and hostess.

Scarcely an hour had passed when they heard a summons at the outer gate, and presently a slave came to announce that a warrior wished to speak to Tarzan upon a matter of urgent necessity.

The ape-man arose. "I will go outside and see him," he said.

"Be careful," cautioned Gemnon's father. "You have bitter enemies who would be glad to see you destroyed."

"I shall be careful," Tarzan assured him as he left the room behind the slave.

At the gate two warriors connected with the house were detaining a huge man whom Tarzan recognized even from a distance as Phobeg. "I must speak with you at once and alone," said the latter.

"This man is all right," Tarzan told the guards. "Let him enter and I will talk with him in the garden."

When they had walked a short distance from the guards, Tarzan

paused and faced his visitor. "What is it?" he asked. "You have brought me bad news?"

"Very bad," replied Phobeg. "Gemnon, Thudos, and many of their friends have been arrested and are now in the dungeons. Doria has been taken and is imprisoned in the temple. I did not expect to find you at liberty, but took the chance that Nemone's interest in you might have saved you temporarily. If you can escape from Cathne, do so at once. Her mood may change at any moment; she is as mad as a monkey."

"Thank you, Phobeg," said the ape-man. "Now get back to your quarters before you become embroiled in this affair." "And you will escape?" asked the warrior.

"I owe something to Gemnon," replied Tarzan, "for his kindness and his friendship, so I shall not go until I have done what I can to help him."

"No one can help him," stated Phobeg emphatically.

"All that you will do is get yourself in trouble."

"I shall have to chance it, and now good-bye, my friend; but before you go tell me where Doria is imprisoned."

"On the third floor of the temple at the rear of the building, just above the doorway where I awaited you this evening."

Tarzan accompanied Phobeg to the gate and out into the avenue. "Where are you going?" demanded the latter.

"To the palace."

"You, too, are mad," protested Phobeg, but already the ape-man had left him and was walking rapidly along the avenue in the direction of the palace.

It was late, but Tarzan was now a familiar figure to the palace guards, and when he told them that Nemone had summoned him they let him enter, nor was he stopped until he had reached the anteroom outside the queen's apartments. Here a noble on guard protested that the hour was late and that the queen had retired, but Tarzan insisted upon seeing her.

"Tell her it is Tarzan," he said.

"I do not dare disturb her," explained the noble nervously.

"I dare," said Tarzan and stepped to the door leading to the ivory

room where Nemone had been accustomed to receive him. The noble sought to interfere but the ape-man pushed him aside and attempted to open the door, only to find it securely bolted upon the opposite side. Then with his clenched fist he pounded loudly upon its carved surface.

Instantly from beyond it came the savage growls of Belthar and a moment later the frightened voice of a woman. "Who is there?" she demanded. "The queen sleeps. Who dares disturb her?"

"Go and awaken her," shouted Tarzan through the door. "Tell her that Tarzan is here and wishes to see her at once."

"I am afraid," replied the girl. "The queen will be angry. Go away, and come in the morning."

Then Tarzan heard another voice beyond the door demanding, "Who is it comes pounding on Nemone's door at such an hour?" and recognized it as the queen's.

"It is the noble Tarzan," replied the slave girl.

"Draw the bolts and admit him," commanded Nemone, and as the door swung open Tarzan stepped into the ivory room.

The queen stood halfway across the apartment, facing him. She directed the slave to rebolt the door and leave the apartment; then she turned and, walking to the couch, motioned Tarzan to approach. As she sank among the soft cushions she motioned Tarzan to her side.

"I am glad you came," she said. "I could not sleep. I have been thinking of you. But tell me, why did you come? Had you been thinking of me?"

"I have been thinking of you, Nemone," replied the ape-man. "I have been thinking that perhaps you will help me; that you can help me, I know."

"You have only to ask," replied the queen softly.

"There is no favour that you may not have from Nemone for the asking."

A single cresset shed a soft, flickering light that scarcely dispelled the darkness of the room, at the far end of which the yellow-green eyes of Belthar blazed like twin lamps.

Then that same fatal door at the far end of the apartment opened and the tapping of a metal-shod staff upon the stone floor brought

them both erect to gaze into the snarling face of M'duze.

"You fool!" cried the old hag in a shrill falsetto. "Send the man away, unless you would see him killed here before your eyes! Send him away at once!"

Nemone sprang to her feet and faced the old woman who was now trembling with rage.

"You have gone too far, M'duze," she said in a cold and level voice. "Remember that I am queen.

She glided quickly toward the old woman, and as she passed a low stand she stooped and seized something that lay there. Suddenly the slave woman shrieked and shrank away, but before she could turn and flee Nemone was upon her and seized her by the hair.

"Always you have ruined my life," cried Nemone, "you and Tomos. You have robbed me of happiness, and for that, this" and she drove the gleaming blade of a knife into the withered breast of the screaming woman.

Presently M'duze ceased shrieking and sank to the floor. Someone was pounding upon the door to the anteroom and the terrified voices of nobles and guardsmen could be heard demanding entrance. In his corner Belthar tugged at his chains and roared. Nemone stood looking down upon M'duze with blazing eyes and snarling lips. Then she turned slowly towards the door upon which the pounding of her retainers' fists resounded. "Have done!" she called imperiously. "I, Nemone the queen, am safe."

The voices beyond the door died away as the guardsmen returned to their posts; then Nemone faced Tarzan. She looked suddenly worn and very tired. "That favour," she said, "ask it another time. Nemone is unstrung."

"I must ask it now," replied Tarzan; "tomorrow may be too late."

"Very well," she said. "I am listening. "What is it?"

"There is a noble in your court who has been very kind to me since I have been in Cathne," commenced Tarzan.

"Now he is in trouble, and I have come to ask you to save him."

Nemone's brow clouded. "Who is he?" she demanded.

"Gemnon," replied the ape-man. "He has been arrested with Thudos and the daughter of Thudos and several of their friends. It is

only a plot to destroy me.

"You dare come to me to intercede for traitors!" cried the queen, blazing with sudden fury. "But I know the reason; you love Doria!"

"I do not love her. I have seen her but once. Gemnon loves her. Let them be happy, Nemone."

"I am not happy," she replied; "why should they be happy?"

She turned away and buried her face in her arms as she sank to the couch; he saw her shoulders shaken by sobs, and pity filled his heart. He drew nearer to console her, but he had no chance to speak before she wheeled upon him, her eyes flashing through tears. "The girl, Doria, dies!" she cried. "Xarator shall have her tomorrow!"

Chapter 18

FLAMING XARATOR

Her wrists and ankles bound, Doria, the daughter of Thudos, lay on a pile of skins in a room upon the third floor of the temple of Thoos. Diffused moonlight entered the single window, relieving the darkness of the interior of her prison. She had seen her father seized and dragged away; she was in the power of one so ruthless that she knew she could expect no mercy and that either death or cruel disfigurement awaited her, yet she did not weep.

Above her grief rose the pride of the noble blood of the house of Thudos, the courage of a line of warriors that stretched back into the forgotten ages; and she was brave.

She thought of Gemnon, and then the tears almost came, not for herself but for him, because of the grief that would be his when he learned of her fate. She did not know that he, too, had fallen into the clutches of the enemies of her father.

Presently she heard the sound of footsteps approaching along the corridor, heard them stop before the door behind which she was locked. The door swung open and the room was illuminated by the light of a torch held in the hand of a man who entered and closed the door behind him.

The girl lying upon the pile of skins recognized Erot. She saw him place the blazing torch in a wall socket designed for the purpose and turn toward her.

"Ah, the lovely Doria!" he exclaimed. "What ill fate has brought

you here?"

"Doubtless the noble Erot could answer that question better than I," she replied.

"Yes, I believe that he could; in fact, I know it. It was I who caused you to be brought here; it was I who caused your father to be imprisoned; it was I who sent Gemnor. to the same cell with the noble Thudos."

"Gemnon imprisoned!" cried the girl.

"Yes, with many other conspirators against the throne. Behind his back they used to sneer at Erot because he was not a lion man. They will not sneer for long."

"And what is to be done with me?" asked the girl.

"Nemone has decreed Xarator for you," replied Erot. "You are even now lying upon the skins in which you are to be sewn. It is for that purpose that I am here. My good friend Tomos the councillor sent me to sew you into the bag."

At that moment, a low growl sounded from the direction of the window. Erot looked up, and his face went ashy white. He leaped back and fled toward the door upon the opposite side of the room, his craven heart pounding in terror.

It was early in the morning as the procession formed that was to accompany the doomed Doria to Xarator, for Xarator lies sixteen miles from the city of Cathne in the mountains at the far end of the valley of Onthar, and the procession could move no faster than the lions drawing the chariot of the queen would walk, which was not fast.

Bred for generations for this purpose, the lions of Cathne had far greater endurance than forest bred lions, yet it would be well into the night before it could be hoped to make the long journey to Xarator and return. Hundreds of slaves bore torches with which to light the homeward Journey after night had fallen.

Nemone entered her chariot. She was wrapped in woollen robes and the skins of animals, for the morning air was still chill. At her side walked Tomos, nervous and ill at ease. He knew that M'duze was dead and wondered if he would be next. The queen's manner was curt and abrupt, filling him with dread, for now there was no M'duze to protect him from the easily aroused wrath of Nemone.

"Where is Tarzan?" she demanded.

"I do not know, majesty," replied Tomos. "I have not seen him."

"Produce him," commanded Nemone sullenly. "It grows late, and Nemone is not accustomed to wait upon any.

"But, majesty… " began Tomos again.

"Here he comes now!" exclaimed Nemone as Tarzan strode up the avenue toward her.

Tomos breathed a sigh of relief and wiped the perspiration from his forehead. He did not like Tarzan, but in all his life he had never before been so glad to see anyone alive and well.

"You are late," said Nemone as Tarzan stopped beside her chariot.

The Lord of the Jungle made no reply.

"We are not accustomed to being delayed," she continued a little sharply.

"Perhaps if you placed me in the custody of Erot, as I suggested, he would deliver me on time in future."

Nemone ignored this and turned to Tomos. "We are ready," she said.

At a word from the councillor a trumpeter at his side raised his instrument to his lips and sounded a call. Slowly the long procession began to move, and like a huge serpent crawled toward the bridge of gold. The citizens lining the avenue moved with it, men, women, and children. The women and children carried packages in which food was wrapped, the men bore arms. A journey to Xarator was an event. It took them the length of Onthar where wild lions roamed and where Athnean raiders might set upon them at any moment of the day or night, especially of the night, so the march took on something of the aspects of both a pageant and a military excursion.

Behind the golden chariot of the queen rolled a second chariot on the floor of which lay a bundle sewn in the skins of lions. Chained to this chariot were Thudos and Gemnon. Following were a hundred chariots driven by nobles in gold and ivory, while other nobles on foot entirely surrounded the chariot of the queen.

There were columns of marching warriors in the lead, and in the rear were the war lions of Cathne, the royal fighting lions of the queen. Keepers held them on leashes of gold, and proud nobles of

ancient families marched beside them-the lion men of Cathne.

The barbaric splendour of the scene impressed even the ape-man who cared little for display, though he gave no outward sign of interest as he strode at the wheel of Nemone's chariot drawn by its eight great lions held in leash by twenty four powerful slaves in tunics of red and gold.

The sun, climbing into the heavens, was bringing heat. Slaves carrying an umbrella over the queen adjusted it to fend the hot rays from her; others waved lions' tails attached to the ends of long poles to and fro about her to drive the insects away. A gentle breeze carried the dust of the long column lazily toward the west.

Nemone sighed and turned to Tarzan. "Why were you late?" she asked.

"Would it be strange that I overslept?" he asked. "It was late when I left the palace, and there was no keeper to awaken me since you took Gemnon away.

"Had you wished to see me again as badly as I wished to see you, you would not have been late."

"I was as anxious to be here as you," he replied.

"You have never seen Xarator?" she asked.

"No".

"It is a holy mountain, created by Thoos for the enemies of the kings and queens of Cathne. In all the world there is nothing like it."

"I am going to enjoy seeing it," replied the ape-man grimly.

They were approaching a fork in the road. "That road leading to the right runs through the Pass of the Warriors into the valley of Thenar," she explained. "Some day I shall send you on a raid to Thenar, and you shall bring me Athne's greatest warriors as hostages."

Tarzan thought of Valthor and wondered if he had reached Athne in safety. He glanced back at Thudos and Gemnon. He had not spoken to them, but it was because of them that he was here. He might easily have escaped had he not determined to remain until he was certain that he could not aid these friends. Their case appeared hopeless, yet the ape-man had not given up hope.

At noon the procession stopped for lunch. The populace scattered

about seeking the shade of the trees that dotted the plain and that had not already been selected by the queen and the nobles. The lions were led into shade, where they lay down to rest. Warriors, always on the lookout for danger, stood guard about the temporary encampment.

There was always danger on the Field of the Lions.

The halt was brief; in half an hour the cavalcade was on the march again. There was less talking now; silence and the great heat hung over the dusty column. The hills that bounded the valley upon the north were close, and soon they entered them, following a canyon upward to a winding mountain road that led into the hills above.

Presently the smell of sulphur fumes came plainly to the nostrils of the ape-man, and a little later the column turned the shoulder of a great mass of volcanic rock and came upon the edge of a huge crater. Far below, molten rock bubbled, sending up spurts of flame, geysers of steam, and columns of yellow smoke. The scene was impressive and awe-inspiring. Tarzan stood with folded arms and bent head gazing down into the seething inferno until the queen touched him on the shoulder. "What do you think of Xarator?" she asked.

He shook his head. "There are some emotions," he answered slowly, "for which no words have yet been coined."

"It was created by Thoos for the kings of Cathne," she explained proudly.

Tarzan made no reply; perhaps he was thinking that here again the lexicographers had failed to furnish words adequate to the occasion.

On either side of the royal party the people crowded close to the edge of the crater that they might miss nothing of what was about to transpire. The children laughed and played, or teased their mothers for the food that was being saved for the evening meal upon the return journey to Cathne.

The ceremony at Xarator, though it bore the authority of so-called justice, was of a semi-religious nature that required the presence and active participation of priests, two of whom lifted the sack containing the victim from the chariot and placed it at the edge of the crater at the feet of the queen.

As two other priests lifted the body from the ground and were about to hurl it into the crater, she stopped them with a curt command. "Wait!" she cried. "We would look upon the too great beauty of Doria, the daughter of Thudos, the traitor."

All eyes were upon the priest who drew his dagger and ripped open the bag along one loosely sewn seam. The eyes of Thudos and Gemnon were fixed upon the still figure outlined beneath the tawny skins of lions. Beads of perspiration stood upon their foreheads; their jaws and their fists were clenched. The eyes of Tarzan turned from the activities of the priest to the face of the queen; between narrowed lids, from beneath stern brows they watched her.

The priests, gathering the bag by one side, raised it and let the body roll out upon the ground where all could see it. There was a gasp of astonishment. Nemone cried out in a sudden fit of rage. The body was that of Erot, and he was dead!

Chapter 19

THE QUEEN'S QUARRY

After the first involuntary cries of surprise and rage, an ominous silence fell upon the barbaric scene. Now all eyes were centred upon the queen, whose ordinarily beautiful countenance was almost hideous from rage, a rage which, after her single angry cry, choked further utterance for the moment. But at length she found her voice and turned furiously upon Tomos.

"What means this?" she demanded, her voice now controlled and as cold as the steel in the sheath at her side.

Tomos, who was as much astounded as she, stammered as he trembled in his sandals of elephant hide. "There are traitors even in the temple of Thoos!" he cried. "I chose Erot to prepare the girl for the embraces of Xarator because I knew that his loyalty to his queen would ensure the work being well done. I did not know, O gracious Nemone, that this vile crime had been committed or that the body of Erot had been substituted for that of the daughter of Thudos until this very instant."

With an expression of disgust the queen commanded the priests to hurl the body of Erot into the crater, and, as it was swallowed by the fiery pit, she ordered an immediate return to Cathne.

In morose and gloomy silence she rode down the winding mountain trail and out onto the Field of the Lions, and often her eyes were upon the bronzed giant striding beside her chariot.

At last she broke her silence. "Two of your enemies are gone

now," she said. "I destroyed one; whome do you think destroyed the other?"

"Perhaps I did," suggested Tarzan with a "I had been thinking of that possibility," replied Nemone, but she did not smile.

"Whoever did it performed a service for Cathne."

"Perhaps," she half agreed, "but it is not the killing of Erot that annoys me. It is the effrontery that dared interfere with the plans of Nemone."

Tarzan shrugged his broad shoulders, but remained silent.

The tedious journey back to Cathne ended at last, an with flaring torches lighting the way, the queen's procession crossed the bridge of gold and entered the city. Here she immediately ordered a thorough search to be made for Doria.

Thudos and Gemnon, happy but mystified, were returned to their cell to await the new doom that Nemone would fix for them. Tarzan was commanded to accompany Nemone into the palace and dine with her. Tomos had been dismissed with a curt injunction to find Doria or prepare for the worst.

Tarzan and the queen ate alone in a small dining room attended only by slaves, and when the meal was over Nemone conducted him to the now all too familiar ivory room, where he was greeted by the angry growls of Belthar "Erot and M'duze are dead," said the queen, "and I have sent Tomos away. There will be none to disturb us tonight."

The ape-man sat with his eyes fixed upon her, studying her. It seemed incredible that this sweet and lovely woman could be the cruel tyrant that was Nemone the queen.

But then, as the Lord of the Jungle looked at her, the spell that had held him vanished. Beneath the beautiful exterior he saw the crazed mind of a mad woman. He saw the creature that cast defenceless men to will beasts that disfigured or destroyed women who might be more beautiful than she, and all that was fine in him revolted.

With a half growl he arose to his feet. Nemone gazed for a moment questioningly at the man above her; then she seemed to realize what he was thinking, and the mad, cruel light of rage blazed in her eyes. She sprang to one side of the room where a

metal gong depended from the ceiling and seizing the striker smote it three times.

The brazen notes rang through the chamber mingling with the roars of the infuriated lion Belthar.

Tarzan stood watching her; she seemed wholly irresponsible, quite mad. It would be useless to attempt to reason with her. He moved slowly toward the door, but before he reached it, it swung open, and a score of warriors accompanied by two nobles rushed in.

"Take this man!" ordered Nemone. "Throw him into the cell with the other enemies of the queen!"

Tarzan was unarmed. He had worn only a sword when he entered the ivory room and that he had unbuckled and laid upon a stand near the doorway. There were twenty spears levelled at him, twenty spears that entirely encircled him. With a shrug he surrendered. It was that or death. In prison he might find the means to escape; at least he would see Gemnon again, and there was something that he very much wished to tell Gemnon and Thudos.

As the soldiers conducted him from the room and the door closed behind them, Nemone threw herself among the cushions of her couch, her body racked by choking sobs. The great lion grumbled in the dusky corner of the room. Suddenly Nemone sat erect and her eyes blazed into the blazing eyes of the lion. For a moment she sat there thus, and then she arose and a peal of maniacal laughter broke from her lips.

Thudos and Gemnon sitting in their cell heard the tramp of marching men approaching the prison in which they were confined. "Evidently Nemone cannot wait until tomorrow," said Thudos.

"You think she is sending for us now?" asked Gemnon.

"What else?" demanded the older man. "The lion pit can be illuminated."

As they waited and listened, the steps stopped outside their cell, the door was pushed open, and a man entered. The warriors had carried no torches and neither neither Thudos nor Gemnon could discern the features of the newcomer. None of them spoke until the guard had departed out of earshot. "Greetings, Thudos and Gemnon!" exclaimed the new prisoner cheerily.

"Tarzan!" exclaimed Gemnon.

"None other," admitted the ape-man.

"What brings you here?" demanded Thudos.

"Twenty warriors and the whim of a woman, an insane woman," replied Tarzan.

"So you have fallen from favour!" exclaimed Gemnon. "I am sorry."

"It was inevitable," said Tarzan.

"And what will your punishment be?"

"I do not know, but I suspect that it will be quite sufficient. However, that is something that need not concern any of us until it happens. Maybe it won't happen at all."

"There is no room in the dungeon of Nemone for optimism," remarked Thudos with a grim laugh.

"Perhaps not," agreed the ape-man, "but I shall continue to indulge myself. Doubtless Doria felt hopeless in her prison in the temple last night, yet she escaped Xarator."

"That is a miracle that I cannot fathom," said Gemnon.

"It was quite simple," Tarzan assured him. "A loyal friend, whose identity you may guess, came and told me that she was a prisoner in the temple. I went at once to find her. Fortunately the trees of Cathne are old and large and numerous; one of them grows close to the rear of the temple, its branches almost brushing the window of the room in which Doria was confined. When I arrived there, I found Erot there with Doria. I also found the sack in which he had purposed tying her for the journey tc Xarator. What was simpler? I let Erot take the ride that had been planned for Doria."

"You saved her! Where is she?" cried Thudos, his voice breaking in the first emotion he had displayed since he had learned of his daughter's plight.

"Come close," cautioned Tarzan, "lest the walls themselves be enemies." The two men pressed close to the speaker who continued in a low whisper, "Do you recall, Gemnon, that when we were at the gold mine I spoke aside to one of the slaves there?"

"I believe that I did notice it," replied Gemnon. "I thought you were asking questions about the operation of the mine.

"No; I was delivering a message from his brother, and so grateful

was he that he begged that he be permitted to serve me if the opportunity arose. It was to arise much sooner than either of us could have expected; and so, when it was necessary to find a hiding place for Doria, I thought immediately of the isolated hut of Niaka, the headman of the black slaves at the gold mine.

"She is there now, and the man will protect her as long as is necessary. He has promised me that if he hears nothing from me for half a moon he is to understand that none of us three can come to her aid, and that then he will get word to the faithful slaves of the house of Thudos. He says that that will be difficult but not impossible."

"Doria safe!" whispered Gemnon. "Thudos and I may now die happy."

For some time the three men sat in silence that was broken at last by Gemnon. "How did it happen that you knew the brother of a slave well enough to carry a message from one to the other?" he asked, a note of puzzlement in his voice.

"Do you recall Xerstle's grand hunt?" asked Tarzan with a laugh.

"Of course, but what has that to do with it?" demanded Gemnon.

"Do you remember the quarry, the man we saw on the slave block in the market place?"

"Yes."

"He is the brother of Niaka," explained Tarzan.

"But you never had an opportunity to speak to him," objected the young noble.

"Oh, but I did. It was I who helped him escape. That was why his brother was so grateful to me."

"I still do not understand," said Gemnon.

"There is probably much connected with Xerstle's grand hunt that you do not understand," suggested Tarzan. And he went on to tell his part in the hunt.

"Now I am doubly sorry that I must die," said Gemnon.

"Why more so than before?" asked Thudos.

"I shall never have the opportunity to tell the story of Xerstle's grand hunt," he explained. "What a story that would make!"

The morning dawned bright and beautiful, just as though there

was no misery or sorrow or cruelty in the world, but it did not change matters at all, other than to make the cell in which the three men were confined uncomfortably warm as the day progressed.

Shortly after noon a guard came and took Tarzan away. All three of the prisoners were acquainted with the officer who commanded it, a decent fellow who spoke sympathetically to them. "Is he coming back?" asked Thudos, nodding toward Tarzan.

The officer shook his head. "No. The queen hunts today."

Thudos and Gemnon pressed the ape-man's shoulder.

No word was spoken, but that wordless farewell was more eloquent than words. They saw him go out, saw the door close behind him, but neither spoke, and so they sat for a long hour in silence.

In the guardroom, to which he had been conducted from his cell, Tarzan was heavily chained. A golden collar was placed about his neck, and a chain reaching from each side of it was held in the hands of a warrior.

"Why all the precautions?" demanded the ape-man.

"It is merely a custom," explained the officer. "It is always thus that the queen's quarry is led to the Field of the Lions."

Once again Tarzan of the Apes walked near the chariot of the queen of Cathne, but this time he walked behind it, a chained prisoner between two stalwart warriors and surrounded by a score of others. Once again he crossed the bridge of gold out onto the Field of the Lions in the valley of Onthar.

The procession did not go far, scarcely more than a mile from the city. With scowling brows Nemone sat brooding in her chariot as it stopped at last at the point she had selected for the start of the hunt. She ordered the guard to fetch the prisoner to her. She was looking straight ahead as the ape-man halted by the wheel of her chariot.

"Send all away except the two warriors who hold him," commanded Nemone.

"You may send them, too, if you wish," said Tarzan. "I give you my word not to harm you or try to escape while they are away.

Nemone, still looking straight ahead, was silent for a moment; then, "You may all go. I would speak with the prisoner alone."

When the guard had departed a number of paces, the queen turned her eyes toward Tarzan and found his smiling into her own. "You are going to be very happy, Nemone," he said in an easy, friendly voice.

"What do you mean?" she asked. "How am I going to be happy?"

"You are going to see me die, that is if the lion catches me," he laughed.

"You think that will give me pleasure? Well, I thought so myself, but now I am wondering if it will. Nothing in life is ever what I hope for."

"Pôssibly you don't hope for the right things," he suggested. "Did you ever try hoping for something that would bring pleasure and happiness to someone beside yourself?"

"Why should I?" she asked. "I hope for my own happiness; let others do the same. I strive for my own happiness… "

"And never have any," interrupted the ape-man good-naturedly.

"Probably I should have less if I strove only for the happiness of others," she insisted.

"There are people like that," he assented. "Perhaps you are one of them, so you might as well go on striving for happiness in your own way. Of course you won't get it, but you will at least have the pleasures of anticipation, and that is something."

"I think I know myself and my own affairs well enough to determine for myself how to conduct my life," she said with a note of asperity in her voice.

Tarzan shrugged. "It was not in my thoughts to interfere," he said. "If you are determined to kill me and are quite sure that you will derive pleasure from it, why, I should be the last in the world to suggest that you abandon the idea."

"You do not amuse me," said Nemone haughtily. "I do not care for irony that is aimed at myself." She turned fiercely on him. "Men have died for less!" she cried, and the Lord of the Jungle laughed in her face.

"How many times?" he asked.

"A moment ago," said Nemone, "I was beginning to regret the thing that is about to happen. Had you been different, I might have relented and returned you to faviour, but you do everything to

antagonize me. You affront me, you insult me, you laugh at me." Her voice was rising, a barometric indication, Tarzan had learned, of her mental state.

"You will go on killing people and being unhappy until it is your turn to be killed," Tarzan said.

She shuddered. "Killed!" she repeated. "Yes, they are all killed, the kings and queens of Cathne. But it is not my turn yet. While Belthar lives, Nemone lives."

She was silent for a moment. "You may live, too, Tarzan, if you kneel here, before my people, and beg for mercy. "Bring on your lion," said Tarzan. "His mercy might be kinder than Nemone's."

"You refuse?" she demanded angrily. "You would kill me eventually," he replied. "There is a chance the lion may not be able to."

"Not a chance!" she said. "Have you seen the lion?"

"No."

Nemone turned and called a noble. "Have the hunting lion brought to scent the quarry!"

Behind them there was a scattering of troops and nobles as they made an avenue for the hunting lion and his keepers, and along the avenue Tarzan saw a great lion straining at the golden leashes to which eight men clung. Growling and roaring, the beast sprang from side to side in an effort to seize a keeper or lay hold upon one of the warriors or nobles that lined the way; so that it was all that four stalwart men on either side of him could do to prevent his accomplishing his design.

He was still afar when Tarzan saw the tuft of white hair in the centre of his mane between his ears. It was Belthar!

Nemone was eyeing the man at her side as a cat might eye a mouse, but though the lion was close now she saw no change in the expression on Tarzan's face. "Do you not recognize him?" she demanded.

"Of course I do," he replied.

"And you are not afraid?"

"Of what?" he asked, looking at her wonderingly.

She stamped her foot in anger, thinking that he was trying to rob

her of the satisfaction of witnessing his terror, for how could she know that Tarzan of the Apes could not understand the meaning of fear? "Prepare for the grand hunt!" she commanded, turning to a noble standing with the guard.

The warriors who had held Tarzan in leash ran forward and picked up the golden chains that were attached to the golden collar about his neck, the guards took posts about the chariot of the queen, and Tarzan was led a few yards in advance of it. Then the keepers brought Belthar closer to him, holding him just out of reach but only with difficulty, for when the irascible beast recognized the ape-man he flew into a frenzy of rage that taxed the eight men to hold him at all.

A noble approached Tarzan. He was Phordos, the father of Gemnon, hereditary captain of the hunt for the rulers of Cathne. He came quite close to Tarzan and spoke to him in a low whisper. "I am sorry that I must have a part in this," he said, "but my office requires it." And then aloud, "In the name of the queen, silence! These are the rules of the grand hunt of Nemone, queen of Cathne: the quarry shall move north down the centre of the lane of warriors; when he has proceeded a hundred paces the keepers shall unleash the hunting lion, Belthar. Let no man distract the lion from the chase or aid the quarry, under penalty of death."

"What if I elude him and escape?" demanded the ape-man. "Shall I have my freedom then?"

Phordos shook his head sadly. "You will not escape him," he said. Then he turned toward the queen and knelt. "Allis in readiness, your majesty. Shall the hunt commence?"

"Let the lion scent the quarry once more; then the hunt may start," she directed.

The keepers let Belthar move a little closer to the ape-man.

Nemone leaned forward eagerly, staring at the savage beast that was the pride of her stable; the light of insanity gleamed in her eyes now. "It is enough!" she cried.

In a hollow near the river that runs past Cathne a lion lay asleep in dense brush, a mighty beast with a yellow coat and a great black mane. Strange sounds coming to him from the plain disturbed him and he rumbled complainmgly in his throat, but as yet he seemed only half awake.

His eyes were closed, but his half wakefulness was only seeming. Numa was awake, but he wanted to sleep and was angry with the men-things that were disturbing him. They were not too close as yet, but he knew that if they came closer he would have to get up and investigate. and that he did not want to do. He felt very lazy.

Out on the field Tarzan was striding along the spear bound lane. He counted his steps, knowing that at the hundredth Belthar would be loosed upon him. The ape-man had a plan. Across the river to the east was the forest in which he had hunted with Xerstle and Pindes and Gemnon; could he reach it, he would be safe. No lion or no man could hope ever to overtake the Lord of the Jungle once he swung to the branches of those towering old trees.

But could he reach the wood before Belthar overtook him? Tarzan was swift, but there are few creatures as swift as Numa at the height of his charge. With a start of a hundred paces, the ape-man felt that he might outdistance an ordinary lion, but Belthar was no ordinary lion.

At the hundredth pace Tarzan leaped forward at top speed. Behind him he heard the frenzied roar of the hunting lion as his leashes were slipped and, mingling with it, the roar of the crowd.

Smoothly and low ran Belthar, the hunting lion, swiftly closing up the distance that separated him from the quarry. He looked neither to right nor to left; his fierce, blazing eves remained fixed upon the fleeing man ahead.

Belthar was gaining on the quarry when Tarzan turned suddenly to the east toward the river after he had passed the end of the gauntlet that had held him to a straight path at the beginning of his flight.

A scream of rage burst from the lips of Nemone as she saw and realized the purpose of the quarry. A sullen roar rose from the pursuing crowd. They had not thought that the hunted man had a chance, but now they understood that he might yet reach the river and the forest.

Tarzan, glancing back over a bronzed shoulder, realized that the end was near. The river was still two hundred yards away and the lion, steadily gaining on him, but fifty.

Then the ape-man turned and waited. He stood at ease, his arms hanging at his side, but he was alert and ready.

He knew precisely what Belthar would do, and he knew what he would do. No amount of training would have changed the lion's instinctive method of attack. He would rush at Tarzan, rear upon his hind feet when close, seize him with his taloned paws and drive his great fangs through his head or neck or shoulder. Then he would drag him down.

But Tarzan had met the charge of lions before. It would not be quite as easy for Belthar as Belthar and the screaming audience believed, yet the ape-man guessed that, without a knife, he could do no more than delay the inevitable. He would die fighting, however, and now, as Belthar charged growling upon him, he crouched slightly and answered the roaring challenge of the carnivore with a roar as savage as the lion's.

Suddenly he detected a new note in the voice of the crowd, a note of surprise and consternation. Belthar was almost upon him as a tawny body streaked past the ape-man, brushing his leg as it came from behind him, and, as Belthar rose upon his hind feet, fell upon him, a fury of talons and gleaming fangs, a great lion with a golden coat and a black mane-a mighty engine of rage and destruction.

Roaring and growling, the two great beasts rolled upon The ground as they tore at one another with teeth and claws while the astounded ape-man looked on and the chariot of the queen approached, and the breathless crowd pressed forward.

The strange lion was larger than Belthar and more powerful, a giant of a lion in the full prime of his strength and ferocity. Presently Belthar gave him an opening, and his great jaws closed upon the throat of the hunting lion of Nemone, jaws that drove mighty fangs through the thick mane of his adversary, through hide and flesh deep into the jugular of Belthar. Then he braced his feet and shook Belthar as a cat might shake a mouse.

Dropping Belthar to the ground, the victor faced the astonished Cathneans with snarling face. Then he slowly backed to where the ape-man stood and stopped beside him and Tarzan laid his hand upon the black mane of Jad-bal-ja, the Golden Lion.

For a long moment there was unbroken silence as the two faced the enemies of the Lord of the Jungle, and the awed Cathneans only stood and stared; then a woman s voice rose in a weird scream. It was Nemone. Slowly she stepped from her golden car and amidst

utter silence walked toward the dead Belthar while her people watched her, motionless and wondering.

She stopped with her sandalled feet touching the bloody mane of the hunting lion and gazed down upon the dead carnivore.

"Belthar is dead!" she screamed, and whipping her dagger from its sheath drove its glittering point deep into her own heart.

As the moon rose, Tarzan placed a final rock upon a mound of earth beside the river that runs to Cathne through the valley of Onthar.

The warriors and the nobles and the people had followed Phordos to the city to empty the dungeons of Nemone and proclaim Alextar king, leaving their dead queen lying at the edge of the Field of the Lions with the dead Belthar.

The human service they had neglected, the beast-man had performed, and now beneath the soft radiance of an African moon he stood with bowed head beside the grave of a woman who had found happiness at last.

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